Commentary
Volume Fifty-One, Number Three, March 1971

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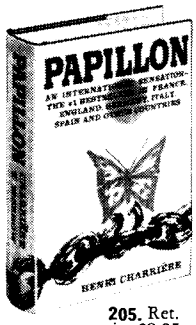

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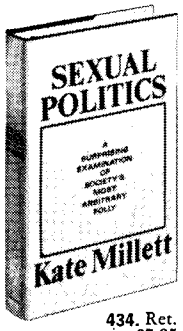

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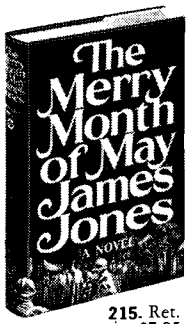

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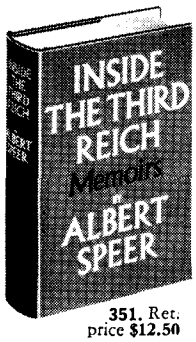

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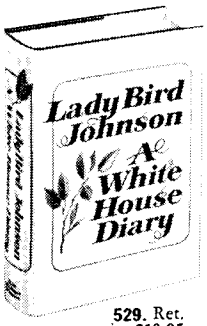

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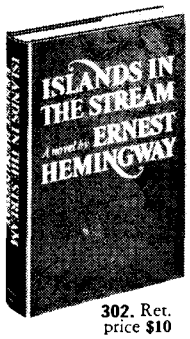

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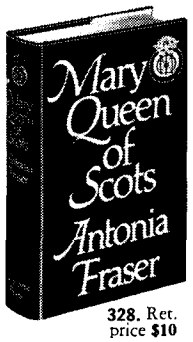

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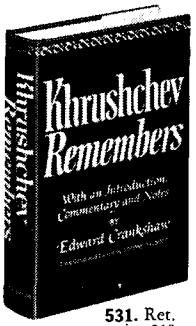

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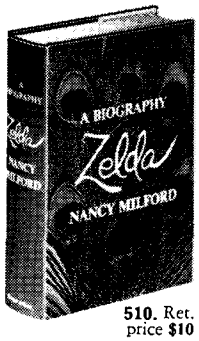

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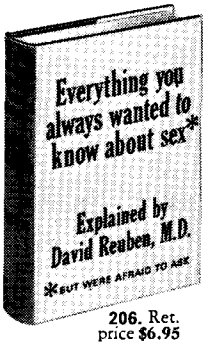

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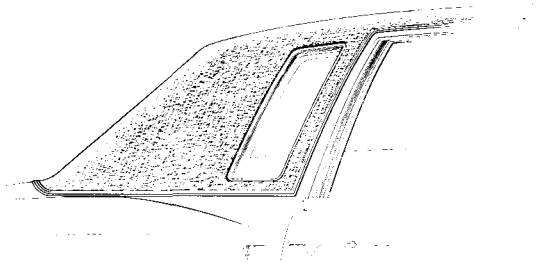

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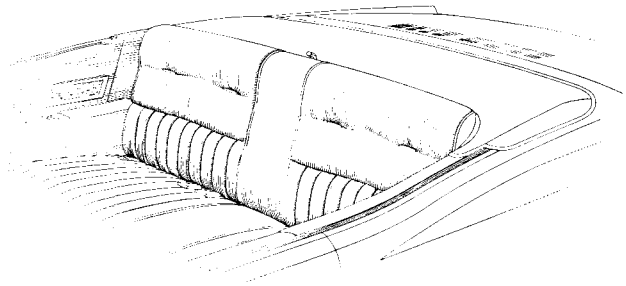

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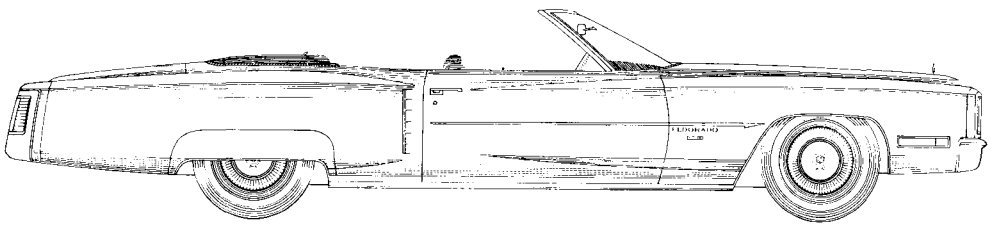

Shown opposite is the 1971 Eldorado Coupe.

Cadillac

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Commentary

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Adversaries or Critics?

Norman Podhoretz

DANIEL P. MOYNIHAN (p. 41) is right, of course: the attitudes of the adversary culture have more and more come to influence the way in which the daily press, the news weeklies, and the television networks report on public affairs. In agreeing with this proposition I do not mean to say—any more than Mr. Moynihan means to suggest—that the New York *Times* or *Newsweek* or NBC deliberately distort the news to suit a particular political bias. On the contrary, the most rigorous and disciplined efforts are made to report the news as it happens, to be objective, to refrain from editorializing except on the editorial page or in clearly designated columns of comment. (This devotion to objectivity, as Mr. Moynihan himself points out, poses problems of its own with respect to staged events or the publication of irresponsible allegations; but that is another matter.) Whenever a story turns out to be distorted, the blame more often falls on carelessness or incompetence than on the conscious wish to mislead. No doubt there are instances of calculated misrepresentation, but I would guess that they are very rare indeed.

Nor, in saying that the attitudes of the adversary culture have come to exert an important influence on the reporting of public affairs, do I wish to suggest that a monolithic ideological perspective guides the writing and the editing of news. The vast majority of people who cover the news in this country are probably Left-of-Center in their own political views, but a range of diversified opinion can be found among them where concrete issues are raised. And even for those who may be exceptionally committed or dogmatic in their political ideas, there is no clear-cut "line" to follow on every question or in every case.

Nor, finally, in pointing to the influence of the adversary culture on the reporting of public affairs, am I speaking of the operations of a skeptical or critical turn of mind. It is admittedly difficult to distinguish in the abstract between a skeptical or critical attitude on the one side and an attitude of preconceived hostility on the other; between the impulse to expose dishonesty or error or corruption on the one side and the impulse to discredit through the tendentious manipulation of evidence on the other; between the wish to keep the officials who conduct the public business honest in every sense, and the wish to prove a case against the entire set of arrangements through which the public business is conducted in a polity like our own: between, in short (to borrow from the late Richard Hofstadter), the realm of "socially responsible criticism" and the realm of the adversary culture. Yet difficult though it may be to draw them in theory and sometimes even in practice, such distinctions are nevertheless real and crucial and need to be drawn.

In the case of the news media in general, the influence of the adversary culture shows itself not so much in the treatment of individual events—although it certainly shows itself there on a sufficient number of occasions—as in a marked disposition to seek out and play up stories which feed the belief that the country is breaking down. *Not* that the country has problems which it has been struggling to solve with varying degrees of failure amounting sometimes to success, but that the country as we know it is about to be defeated at last by the deficiency of its institutions and by the mediocrity and venality of its leaders. Here again the distinction is real and crucial, even though it may not always be easy to draw.

BUT if Mr. Moynihan is right in stressing the influence of the adversary culture on the reporting of public affairs, he is also right, I think, in seeing the growth of this influence as a relatively recent development—a consequence of the entry into the journalistic profession of increasing numbers of highly educated people. To be subjected to higher education in America today (especially in the elite colleges and universities, but by no means in them alone, and especially in the liberal arts from which most young journalists come) is to be exposed to a tradition of ideas not merely at variance but actually at war with the values and premises of bourgeois or middle-class society. Since the adversary culture considers those values to be intrinsically corrupt, and since the polity is dedicated to their more perfect realization, the culture does not bless what the polity attempts to achieve. It withholds its blessing from the attempt itself, it gloats over every failure, and it curses every success.

This last must be stressed above all: that it curses every success. For the benefit of anyone who still doubts that this is so, who still believes that it is the failures of the American political system and of the American social order—the persistence of racial discrimination

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and poverty, for example—which have turned the adversary culture against that system and against that order, here is how an unusually candid spokesman describes the revolt of what he himself calls "the alienated middle class": ". . . this revolt differed from other revolts—including the Negro revolt—which are revolts against acknowledged failures, because it was a revolt not only against failure *but also against what America considered its notable successes.* It was a revolt precisely against the American Way of Life." (The words, and the italics, are Eric Bentley's.)

PREVIOUSLY confined to the world of ideas, this revolt "against the American Way of Life" has in the past ten years been reaching out to the world of affairs, its influence carried by hordes of such youngish apostles as have become so forceful a presence wherever the news is spread. Mr. Moynihan sees possible dangers and threats to the proper functioning of American democracy here. Paradoxically enough, however, it may be that the greater threat in this situation is the one it poses not to the workings of democracy but to the long-range prospects of the adversary culture itself, especially in the vulgarized form in which the attitudes of that culture most often survive the journey from the world of ideas to the world of affairs. Can a preconceived and simplistically-held hostility to the American political system and the American social order survive a prolonged exposure to the public business as it is actually carried on from day to day, from week to week, from month to month? Are not the missionaries more likely to go native, possibly even to the point of an acquiescence in the givens of the world as uncritical in its supine acceptance as it now is in its smugly undifferentiated hostility? The question is worth pondering, most of all for anyone who sees hope in the spread of the adversary culture and in the extension of its influence to the coverage and therefore to the understanding of the daily conduct of public affairs.

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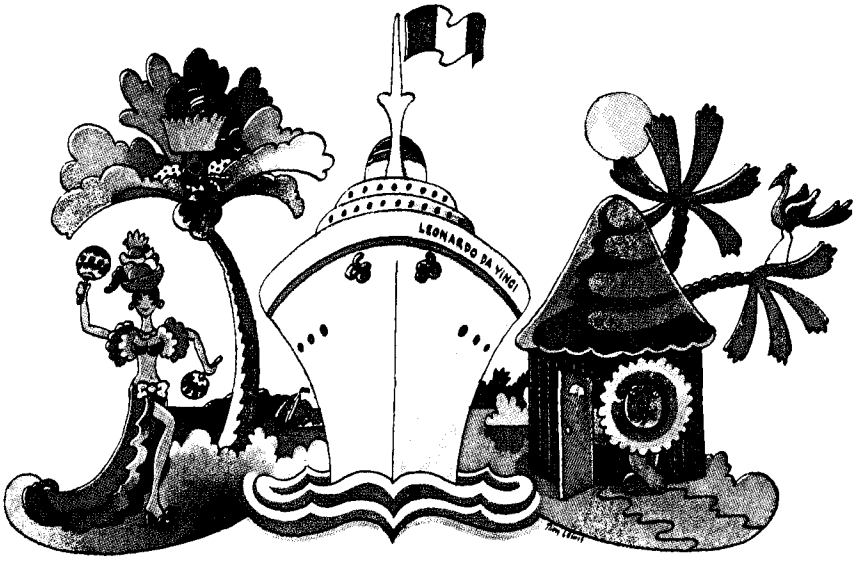

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The Case of the "New York Review"

To the Editor of Commentary:

In his dissection of the *New York Review* ["The Case of the 'New York Review,'" November 1970], Dennis Wrong rhetorically asks if my recent criticism of Steven Kelman's *Push Comes to Shove* "is not tantamount" to urging that the truth about the wrong-doings of the Left should be suppressed. Answering his own question in the affirmative, he goes on to equate my views with those of apologists for Stalinism and various other unworthy causes.

I intended no such implication. Mr. Wrong omits from his quotation of my review two critical statements: first, my belief—derived from Kelman—that his former friends in Harvard SDS "have long refused to pay any attention to what he says"; and second, my regret ("Alas") that his book will mostly be read by those far to his Right rather than by those who need to read it. In short, Mr. Wrong seriously mistakes my intention, and supports his error by failing to quote me in full.

My basic and explicit objection to Kelman's book was not that he revealed the truth about Harvard SDS, but that "for all the validity of his criticisms, Kelman emerges as not a whit less self-righteous than his opponents in SDS." In fact, then, I was agreeing with Mr. Wrong's critique of "the politicized will, feeding on its own self-righteousness. . . ." But where Mr. Wrong seems to see self-righteousness as largely the prerogative of the *NYR* and the New Left, I think I can also detect it as well in some of the critics of the *NYR*, as in the rising tide of Old Left attacks on the New Left.

Mr. Wrong rightly reminds us of the lessons of the 1930's. But there is one important lesson he does not mention: the dissension, chaos, and in-fighting produced among German leftists by the threat of Hitler's rise to power. America today is not Germany in 1931. But in a climate of conservatism, we who are agreed in democratically seeking basic changes in our society must especially try not to fall at the throats of our political neighbors, incessantly accusing each other of self-righteousness, irresponsibility, dogmatism, or "incorrect analysis." If Old Leftists today were to devote all of their very considerable talents to shredding the tattered remnants of the New Left, attacking the elitism of Harvard SDS, or exposing the parochialism of the *NYR*, the Left in America would fritter away its needed energies in internecine warfare. To be sure, we must criticize our friends, the more so because they are our friends. But we must also recognize that the major threats to democracy in America today come from the Right.

Kenneth Keniston
Yale University
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To the Editor of Commentary:

First, Mr. Wrong says that with regard to Czechoslovakia, the *NYR* "did not discuss the liberalization under Dubcek until after the Soviet invasion." While this is technically true, it seems to imply an editorial decision that did not occur. Having written the article myself, I can assure Mr. Wrong that it was my intention, and that of the editors of the *NYR*, that the piece was to be precisely about the liberalization under Dubcek. It was my own schedule, not the wish of the editors, that made it impossible for me to go to Prague before July 1968. I stayed several weeks and left just a few days before the Soviet invasion. In fact, I was in the process of completing the article when the invasion occurred. Naturally, I had to change my report somewhat to include this crucial and unexpected development. To be sure, Mr. Wrong could not be expected to know the history of the article. But as one who writes for magazines he should certainly have realized that an article appearing in the issue of the *NYR* dated September 26, 1968, and ap-

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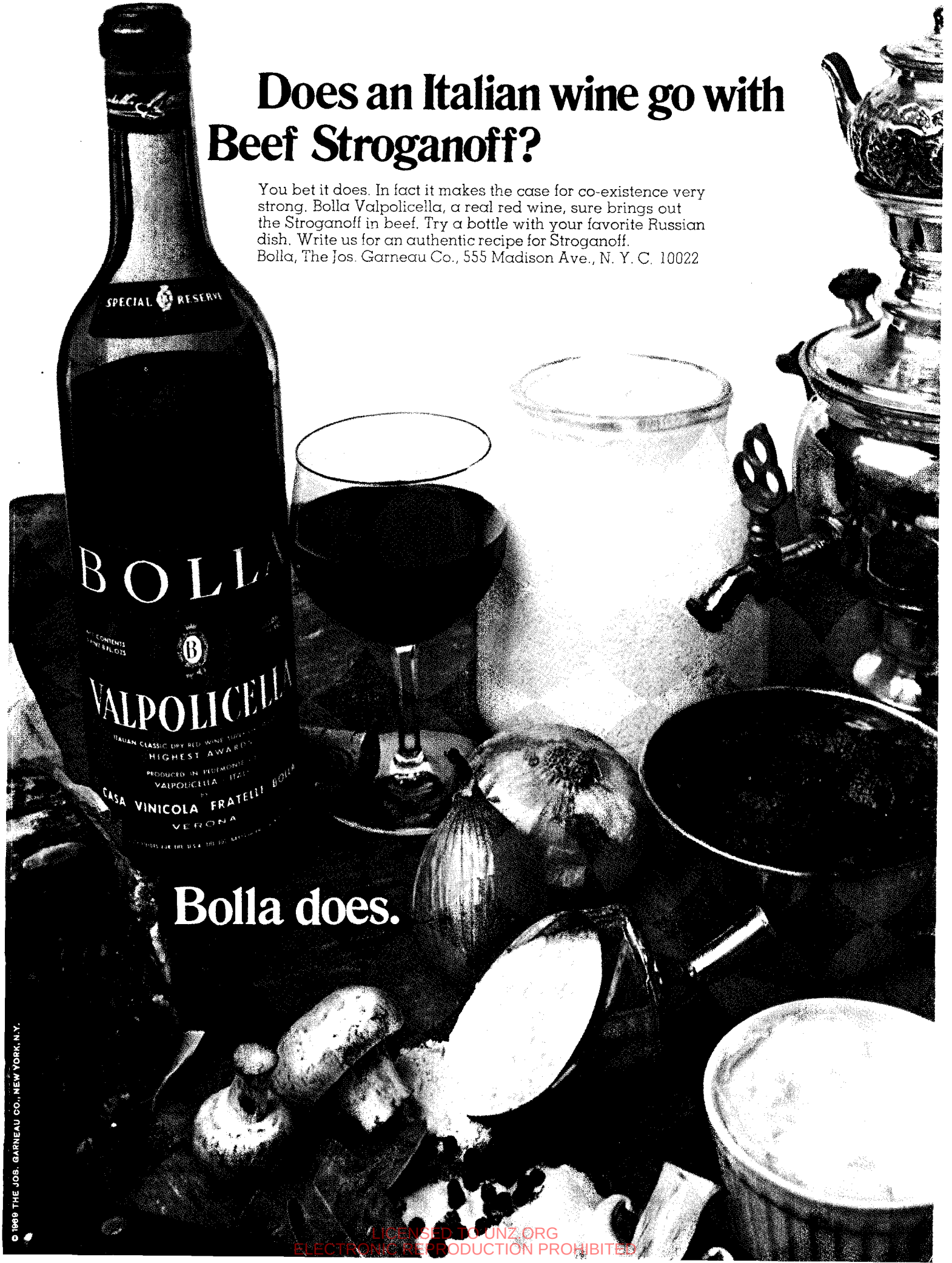

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pearing on the stands two weeks earlier (September 12), as is customary with the *NYR*, could hardly have been commissioned after the Soviet invasion of August 21.

Second, I find objectionable Mr. Wrong's consistent use of "un-American" to describe criticisms by *NYR* writers of government policies, of the educational system, of the social structure, etc.—e.g., "the main component of the *NYR*'s political line is a pervasive anti-Americanism that draws almost as freely on aristocratic, conservative traditions. . . ." Criticisms of public officials and their policies are not un-American. Nor are descriptions of the inadequacy of some of our social institutions. Any reader of COMMENTARY, let alone a regular contributor, could hardly be unaware that such criticisms are one of the basic functions of a magazine of opinion. A press free to criticize the government and to inform its citizens is one of the hallmarks of a democratic society. To imply that such criticisms are somehow "un-American" is shameful semantic demagoguery. Unfortunately Mr. Wrong indulges in it not just once, but on numerous occasions. It not only weakens his argument, but is quite unworthy of him, his subject, and the best traditions of COMMENTARY.

RONALD STEEL
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Dennis Wrong diagnoses the case of the *New York Review of Books* as one of "extravagant, querulous, self-righteous anti-Americanism." He says "the main component of the *NYR*'s political line is a pervasive anti-Americanism," and he believes that writers who do not follow this line—including many who once published in the *Review*—find its pages closed to them.

Mr. Wrong offers no specific test for judging the "American" qualities of a specimen of political discourse, but his assault on various positions advanced by various writers in the *NYR* does clarify what he means by anti-Americanism. The main presenting symptoms of this repulsive disease are: a penchant for conspiracy theories on the assassination of President Kennedy; opposition to racism, bureaucracy, environmental deterioration, uncontrolled technology, and the involvement of intellectuals with the CIA and the Department of Defense; support for the New Left, alienated youth, blacks, and the Third World; calculated indifference toward specifically Jewish interests; unrestrained ideological thinking and frenzied activism.

An examination of this might bring one to conclude that it is hard for a thoughtful and humane person to "think American" these days. But it is also dangerous not to. Dennis Wrong knows how such labels as "anti-American" function in political discourse in the United States. I am sorry to see a man from whom I have learned much join the dreary ranks of those who presume to judge the patriotic credentials of others.

JOHN H. SCHAAR
University of California
Santa Cruz, California

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

As an occasional contributor to the *New York Review*, I believe that Dennis Wrong's article in your November issue is overly broad. I have never considered myself to be either a member of the New Left or of the Radical Chic coterie. I write for the *New York Review* because it is an excellent forum for my views on the criminal law. A number of historians have also contributed since Mr. Wrong's cut-off date of April 1967. I might cite my colleague David Potter, as well as C. Vann Woodward, Eugene Genovese, and William Appleman Williams, none of whom, by any stretch of the imagination, could possibly be considered to be "Rad Chic" or members of the New Left.

I have always found the editor of the *New York Review*, Mr. Robert Silvers, to be an excellent editor and willing to put up with my idiosyncratic ideas. Despite Mr. Wrong's broadside, I trust that no contributor to the *New York Review* will turn his back on Mr. Silvers.

HERBERT L. PACKER
Stanford, California

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . Dennis Wrong's article raises many intriguing questions. Since I am not privy to the editorial decisions and policies of the *NYR*, I cannot comment on these. However on page 53 of his article I am introduced as an example of "an extremely bizarre sign of the direction in which the paper [the *NYR*] was moving," because the *NYR* published my criticism of the Warren Commission and my "in-

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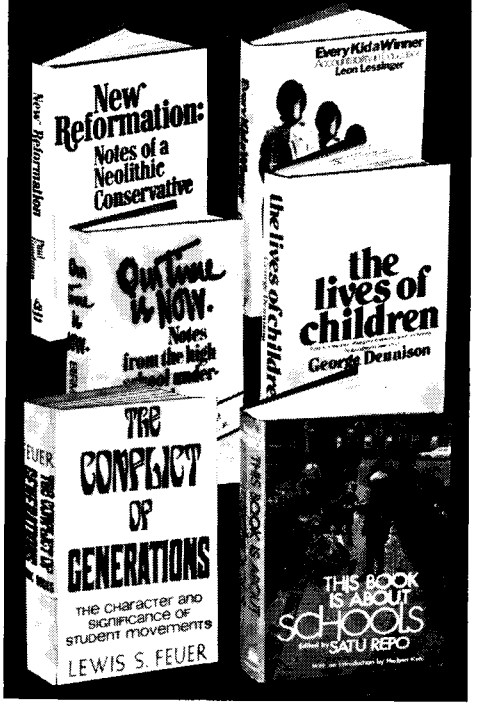
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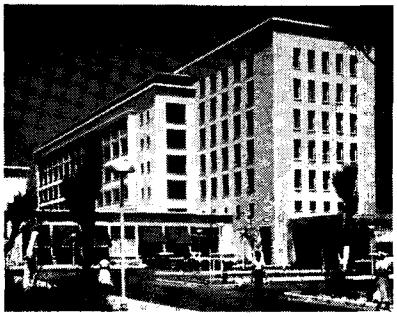

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genious but far-fetched theory of a successful conspiracy to assassinate President Kennedy." I don't want to argue about whether my theory is ingenious and/or far-fetched. Some people like it, some don't. Future historical research will decide whether it has any real merits. (I have a much more elaborate version by now.)

What does intrigue me is that Mr. Wrong sees the publication of my theory as a "bizarre sign." One of the items that first alerted me to the need to look into the Kennedy assassination was an editorial in COMMENTARY, January 1964, signed "N.P.," entitled "The Warren Commission: An Editorial." (I was an avid and thorough reader of COMMENTARY in those days.) N.P. was very worried about whether the Warren Commission would really hold an extensive and independent investigation. And he said: "Is the possibility of a treasonous political conspiracy to be ruled out? Not the least fantastic aspect of the whole fantastic nightmare is the ease with which respectable opinion in America has arrived at the conclusion that such a possibility is absurd; in most other countries, what is regarded as absurd is the idea that the assassination could have been anything *but* a political murder."

The opening paragraphs of my piece, "The Second Oswald," show how influenced I was by N.P.'s agitated words. He and others started my concern with the case. In March 1964 I received an issue of COMMENTARY, with "A Commentary Report" by Léo Sauvage, entitled "The Oswald Affair." As I indicated in my presentation of my "ingenious but far-fetched theory," it was Sauvage's article that first raised for me and many others the possibility that there was some sort of duplication plot. "Léo Sauvage suggested someone was trying to imitate Oswald, that there was a second Oswald" (Popkin, "The Second Oswald," *NYR*, July 28, 1966, p. 15). When I met Mr. Sauvage in the fall of 1966, we discussed his being the originator of the theory. My only claim to originality, if I have any, is having worked out the theory, which was presented in varying forms by several critics of the Warren Commission, in more detail, and into a hypothesis to explain what happened in Dallas on November 22, 1963.

In view of all this, I wonder what bizarre sign of direction COMMENTARY's attack on the official theory of the Kennedy assassination in 1964 represented. Why were they trying to get people like myself agitated even before the Warren Commission had done its "work"? Was this part of the same "extravagant, querulous, self-righteous anti-Americanism" that Mr. Wrong found in the *NYR* in 1966 and 1967? Perhaps Mr. Wrong will carry his researches further and present us with "The Case of COMMENTARY" that might be published in the *NYR*.

RICHARD H. POPKIN
Department of Philosophy
University of California
La Jolla, California

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In his article, Dennis Wrong incorrectly placed historian C. Vann Woodward among pariahs such as Lionel Abel, Gunter Gass [*sic*], Irving Howe, Richard Rovere, and himself. According to Mr. Wrong, their banishment from the *NYR* resulted from divergent political opinions.

Check again, Mr. Wrong. On December 4, 1969, Professor Woodward's article on the Southern writer Wilbur J. Cash appeared; on February 27, 1969, his extended review-essay on 19th-century American racial attitudes was published; in the number of August 1, 1968, he reviewed a collection of essays by New Left historians that Barton J. Bernstein edited.

Also appearing on Mr. Wrong's list of *NYR*-outcasts was historian Richard Hofstadter. Yet, in the *NYR* of December 3, 1970, C. Vann Woodward's eulogy memorializing the passing of Hofstadter was published. That was no act of ideology on the part of the editors and publishers of *NYR*. (For an example of what younger historians thought of Hofstadter's more recent scholarship, see Robert Sklar's review of *The Progressive Historians* in the *Nation*, November 18, 1968, which carried the title: "Historians, Simple-Minded and Complex." Sklar characterized Hofstadter as an elitist historian.)

Pursuing this matter further, to what does Mr. Wrong attribute the presence in *NYR* since 1969 of such distinguished scholars as John K. Fairbank (Chinese history) or Carl Schorske (German history)? Or the very recent articles by American historians like Eric L. McKitrick, John William

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Ward, or Willie Lee Rose? Certainly not ideology, I hope! (After all, Professor Rose's review-essay on the historiography of the martyr John Brown went to great lengths to question the legitimacy of the legend that has survived him by more than 111 years.) Rather, I presume that these scholars were invited to contribute to *NYR* because of their respective reputations as accomplished, highly literate historians.

Just as Dennis Wrong has been fatuous in dealing with this one aspect of *NYR*'s offerings, an equally absurd case might be concocted regarding a frequent contributor to COMMENTARY, the urban historian Stephan Thernstrom. The *American Historical Review* of July 1967 included a notable historiographical article that, among other things, placed Mr. Thernstrom among the so-called New Left historians on the basis of his book, *Poverty and Progress, Social Mobility in a Nineteenth-Century City*; similarly, the obscure but important journal *Radical America*, published by graduate history students at the University of Wisconsin, also devoted extended attention to Mr. Thernstrom's book (March-April 1969). Can we deduce, therefore, that Mr. Thernstrom's appearances in COMMENTARY are analogous to his penetrating the lines of an enemy? I trust that the editor of the magazine would deny this vehemently. Instead, I am sure, Mr. Thernstrom is published on the basis of his well-deserved reputation.

Mr. Wrong's credentials as a sociologist may indeed be imposing, but his understanding of current historiographical trends is quite circumscribed. Rather than blame him as a sociologist, however, I prefer to conclude by saying that it is Mr. Wrong's ideological determinism that has caused him to go so far astray from the reality of *NYR*'s unique contribution to contemporary historical criticism. And isn't that just another version of Stalinism?

MICHAEL H. EBNER
Department of History
Herbert H. Lehman College
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

May I set the record straight regarding one small point in Dennis Wrong's excellent article? Mr. Wrong describes me as belonging to a distinguished group of "old Weimarians." Actually I was not even twelve years old when Hitler came to power, and since I was not a precocious child, my main field of interest at the time was Weimar football (soccer) rather than Weimar culture.

WALTER LAQUEUR
London, England

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Two loud cheers for Dennis Wrong for a brilliant, devastating dissection of the *New York Review*.

It is only two cheers because in a minor way Mr. Wrong shares the ideologizing impulses of those he criticizes. Perhaps that is as it must be. Those of us who are thoroughly bored by the unrelieved dullness, poor writing, and archaic ideas of the *New York Review* could never subject ourselves to reading enough of it to do the job that Dennis Wrong has done. Only someone whose adrenalin responds to the banalities of a McDermott or a Chomsky can perform a proper dissection on them.

Why then should I complain if Mr. Wrong still finds it relevant to posit that he talks for the "democratic Left" rather than simply that he seeks to talk the truth?

The reason for my objecting is admittedly personal. It is annoying to be used by Mr. Wrong as a symbol of some adversary ideology so that he can position himself as an exponent of true "radicalism" and virtue, all the while that, like generations of honest men before him, he has gotten off the main train of current radical orthodoxy.

The social scientist who describes reality as he sees it, if he writes about heated issues at all, will be called ideological names. I am used to being called a radical, a conservative, a militarist, a pacifist, an apologist for the Vietnam war (as Mr. Wrong thinks), and a promoter of peace in Vietnam. Ordinarily, I should not argue since one-dimensional labels are necessarily at once both true and false, and, in any case, irrelevant to the arduous effort to describe the complexity of social reality. But Vietnam is such a charged issue that I cannot let Mr. Wrong's statement pass. The leader of the SDS at MIT had it more nearly correct when he accused me of seeking peace in Vietnam, whereas he wanted Vietcong victory.

What does it mean to be for or against a war? I suspect that Mr. Wrong and I are in considerable

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agreement on Middle Eastern policy and both of us would oppose the destruction of Israel. Does that mean we are for war? Of course not; we both hope and pray and work for peace, but peace turns out to be hard to achieve. Nonresistance means allowing a pogrom and a pogrom is not peace.

The problem is identical in Vietnam. I believe there are ways to acheve peace. Total and immediate American withdrawal is not one of them. Mr. Wrong and I might argue whether after withdrawal the odds favor a victorious Communist minority which would impose its terror on the South Vietnamese, or a successful military dictatorship which would slaughter Communists in Indonesian fashion, or (most likely) a continuation of the war with swings both ways over time; but peace is none of those scenarios. The issue facing America is not whether one is "for" or "against" the war in Vietnam. That formulation is simpleminded cliché-mongering; no one is for it. The issue is how to end the war, and on that issue the typical dovish demonstrator does not have a clue. To give him his due, he has a program for saving American lives: get out. But that is not ending the war, it is perpetuating it.

The world of the ideologist, however, is, in Mr. Wrong's own phrase, that of "the simplifying formulas of either-or," or those who are "for" the war and those who are "against" it. In the world of the ideologist, good guys do only good things, and bad guys only bad ones. Dennis Wrong can see how absurd that is in the *New York Review*'s extreme version. But in his own version, the concededly inept, violent American effort to prevent the subjection of the Vietnamese people by Communist conquest and oppression is treated as an evil parallel, though on a smaller scale, to Stalin's terror in Russia. Viewed through that distorted lens, scholarly analysis of Vietnam is perceived as apologetics, since objective description fails to provide the unqualified grounds for condemnation that partisans would like to have.

Be that as it may, let me not divert attention from the main point. The presence of a pinch of ideological pollution is but a small blemish on the essay which is the art of exposé at its best.

ITHIEL DE SOLA POOL
Massachusetts Institute of
Technology
Cambridge, Massachusetts

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Dennis Wrong's self-serving article reads as if it were composed by a grievance committee. One ordinarily ignores this kind of thing but the political implications are too grave. Mr. Wrong would like us to believe that, notwithstanding his frequent qualifications, the *NYR* has "contributed to the present prospect of a confrontation on all fronts between the Movement at its arrogant, mindless worst and the demagogic, patrioteering Right." But he neither substantiates this charge nor contributes to a responsible analysis of the structure of American society. In fact, at no point in his article does he argue *for* any substantive position. His dismissal of the internal politics of the Third World as a model for American protest is sound, but easy, and not exactly new (having been made often in the *New York Review,* for example, by such writers as Christopher Lasch, George Lichtheim, Ronald Steel, among others). However, that point repetitively made, Mr. Wrong refrains from giving us any sense of *what the relationship actually is* between the present nature of American society and the politics of the Third World, and what the consequences, given that relationship, for a serious American politics, may, in fact, be.

There are, however, some clues to Mr. Wrong's thinking on this question in his long diatribe. He lets us know, for example, that he believes that American society should be changed in the direction of its own ideals. Now it is one thing to imply that the condition of American society is in opposition to its own professed ideals, which is a sociological cliché, but it is quite another to state that change should be in the direction of realizing its ideals. Perhaps the ideals are organically related to the reality of the present state of American society? Perhaps we have always used them to rationalize unpleasant realities? After all, they were formulated at the same time that blacks and Indians were being brutalized in this country. Perhaps American ideals, as Max Weber implied, have played out their role in the construction of the American reality and have, therefore, been demystified? Nonetheless, the Declaration of Independence and the Bill of Rights can still be read, of course, as liberating documents; but would Mr. Wrong subscribe to the rationale for revolution formulated in the former, or the unequivocal defense of due process, so deeply threatened today, as Henry Steele Commager has pointed out, in the latter? To which American ideals is Mr. Wrong referring, to whose interpretations, and to which American reality would he relate them?

All statements of ideals that have remained static over a considerable period of time can easily be reduced to the most diffused and abstract notions; they no longer have any political point if they are not realized in the functioning of social institutions. And as ideals they can always be quoted by their enemies, as Machiavelli knew, to justify realities contrary to their spirit. A man who lectures us about the role of the democratic Left should understand this, and he should be more seriously concerned with examining alternatives to American corporate capitalism both at home and abroad. He might then find that the relevance of the poor who are getting poorer in the Third World, and whose traditional societies have been shattered, is rather greater than he suspects. The poor in the United States, along with the entrapped and mortgaged and, sometimes, desperate middle classes might also attract his attention as part of a bureaucratic capitalist order. Moreover, one who wants to instruct others on the strategy of the democratic Left should be less fearful of backlash. He should understand that the Right is driven by its own needs and may characteristically invent provocations. It does not really need the Left to stir up trouble; it only needs the Left to blame. Would Mr. Wrong then advise that the Left liquidate itself in order to keep the peace? But—alas!—even then the Right would create a Left as Agnew does out of middle-of-the-road Republicans.

Another clue to Mr. Wrong's position seems to be in his notion that Russian tyranny no longer presents an external threat to American society, and that this makes the job of the self-defined democratic Left more feasible in the United States. However, the fact that Russia and the United States are beginning to recognize certain compelling common interests makes the task of an authentically democratic Left far more difficult. That is to say, we must now begin to visualize a planet in

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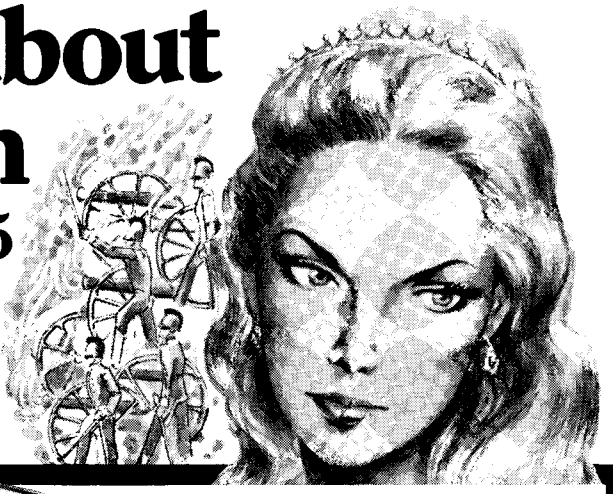

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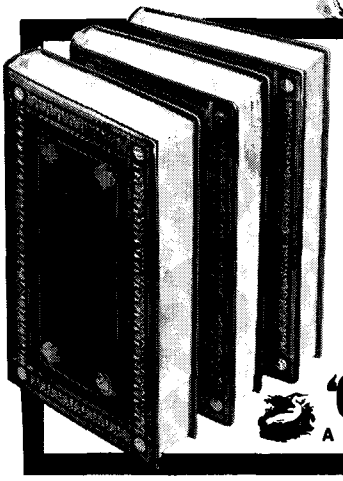

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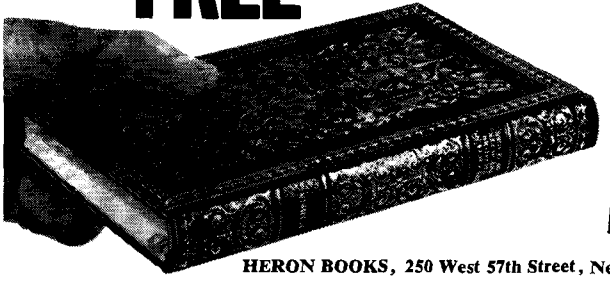

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which American corporate capitalism and Soviet bureaucratic collectivism accommodate themselves to each other at the expense of the cultural and social interests of most of the people of the world. Strangely enough, Mr. Wrong makes no mention of that possibility, and that may be one of the reasons why he has ignored the three articles on Biafra (two by Conor Cruise O'Brien and one by myself), along with the lengthy exchanges of letters on the subject, which have appeared in the *New York Review* during the last three years. For the case of Biafra clearly contradicts the grievance committee's grotesque case against the *New York Review*.

Biafra was not, of course, supported by the "New Left," but was, for the most part, attacked by them. The British, the Russians, and the State Department found themselves objectively allied in the destruction of the new polity. I have expressed myself about the role of the New Left concerning Biafra as follows:

> The behavior of the Soviet-oriented left in Europe and the United States toward Biafra was predictable, but that of the New Left was a subtler betrayal . . . with rare exceptions, the theorists of the New Left failed morally and intellectually to understand the many dimensions of this political and human tragedy which confronted them. . . . Some of their arguments overlapped with the notices in *Pravda*, others were also heard in Washington and Whitehall; they were all rooted in ignorance of the nature of colonialism in Nigeria and of the history of the peoples involved. Worse than ignorant, they were abstract and heartless.
>
> By implication, the New Left demanded that Biafra establish impeccable socialist credentials before it could become worthy of their support. The historical *movement* of the people and their profoundly egalitarian tradition were simply ignored. The dying and the endurance were not enough; nor were the statements of intention, the anti-colonial history of the Ibo or the actual organization of Biafran society.
>
> What Biafran could possibly believe in the authenticity of those European and American theorists of the New Left who misconceived the most important struggle in modern African history? What African radical can now take them seriously? There were only two alternatives—Nigeria or Biafra. The New Left chose Nigeria by omission or commission, and in so doing commended themselves to the oil companies and sanctioned the imperialism of the Great Powers which remains the only guarantee of a united Nigeria. (*Chi, Letters from Biafra*, Preface by Stanley Diamond, New Press, pp. 11-13).

In my *New York Review* article (which was longer than most political essays to appear in the journal), the significance of Great Power assault on Third World cultural possibilities was emphasized; and black militant and New Left indifference or opposition to Biafra was shown to be misconceived. Clearly, Mr. Wrong's notion that radicals who work for *NYR* will not, and moreover, must not openly criticize the New Left (which he does not define except tautologically), is false. It should be noted, also, that the Russian defense of the Arab oligarchies and opposition to Israel as part of Soviet Middle East-African strategy was examined at some length in my Biafra article. (Incidentally, Mr. Wrong is characteristically inaccurate when he writes that the *New York Review* has printed "only *one* discussion of the Middle East crisis": I. F. Stone's piece of August 3, 1967. More recently, the paper published a long discussion of the causes and consequences of the Six-Day War by the Israeli writer, Amos Elon.)

Those who have written for the paper or read it fairly should know that there is no monolithic editorial policy of the type conjured up by Mr. Wrong. One gets the sense, however, that the grievance committee considers opinion that is more critical of American institutions than the material which appears in *Dissent* to come from a New Leftish no man's land, well-organized, conspiratorial, and patricidal. In reality, of course, terrorism in the U.S. is confined to a handful of people in a few splinter groups; and the compulsive activism that Mr. Wrong attacks can hardly be considered characteristic of the *New York Review*, especially if one has read such pieces as the paper's special supplements on violence by Hannah Arendt and J. M. Cameron (which Mr. Wrong, of course, simply does not mention). As a matter of fact, Mr. Wrong is most obviously self-serving when he assesses individuals. He defines Alvin Gouldner, for example, as a man stemming from the Old Left, who presumably defends academic sociology to the younger radicals, and is always dampening their rhetoric. Gouldner is Max Weber Professor of Sociology at Washington University, and a man of some professional weight, not the sort of fellow sociologist Wrong would be eager to antagonize. Yet, in a favorable review in the New York *Times* of Gouldner's important book, *The Coming Crisis in Western Sociology*, Bennett Berger, a principled sociologist, writes: "He [Gouldner] affirms his faith in the 'psychedelic consciousness' of Hippies and the New Left to create new theories authentically expressing that new consciousness, rather than alienating them from it." Moreover, in Berger's view, "Gouldner turns characteristically opaque [as a constructive sociologist], a failure he shares with many young radicals who are more lucid as critics of existing society than as visionaries of a better one."

Clearly, Mr. Wrong projects a New Left category which he slips people into, or out of, at his convenience. One wonders how Mr. Wrong would characterize William Appleman Williams's tribute to the conservative conscience of Herbert Hoover, in the November 5, 1970 issue of *NYR*.

But frustrated, bewildered, and self-defeating political elements have not created the major problems in this country—appalling though their behavior may be—nor do they define the consciousness of many radicals who disagree with Dennis Wrong and his friends. Moreover, it is neither principled nor accurate to confuse the great majority of engaged students, who are the conscience of this country, with fugitive splinters of the New Left.

If Mr. Wrong ignores the Biafra articles, he does, however, mention an article on the New School strike written by Ed Nell and myself, which charges us with sympathetically interpreting the "more idiotic slogans of the New Left" as expressions of a new "life style" —"not to be taken too literally." But the fact is that the New Left played practically no role in the New School strike. For a professional sociologist, Mr. Wrong certainly categorizes in a most vulgar way; he seems to think that the students, whose style we specifically

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differentiated from that of the New Left, are interchangeable with the New Left. He also seems not to have read our critical remarks about the appearance of William Kunstler. But criticism does not lead us into reification or tautological definition. The *New York Review*-New Left equation, which defines each in terms of the other, is the sort of logic that Spiro Agnew indulges himself in. But why does Dennis Wrong do this? One can only conclude that he, and those with whom he would want to associate himself, seem more interested in reifying the New Left than in developing a politics equal to the crises of our time.

In the end, although Mr. Wrong's performance is shallow, it is also poignant. There is so much that he simply does not understand. For example, he does not understand that the literary and political sensibilities of the *New York Review* unite in a defense of culture against the collective and dehumanizing forces in our society. Since he is fond of invoking Max Weber, let me call to his attention certain concluding remarks in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*:

> [The modern economic] order is now bound to the technical and economic conditions of machine production which today determine the lives of all the individuals who are born into this mechanism, not only those directly concerned with economic acquisition, with irresistible force. Perhaps it will so determine them until the last ton of fossilized coal is burnt. In Baxter's view the care for external goods should only lie on the shoulders of the "saint like a light cloak, which can be thrown aside at any moment." But fate decreed that the cloak should become an iron cage . . . material goods have gained an increasing and finally an inexorable power over the lives of men as at no previous period in history. . . .
>
> No one knows who will live in this cage in the future, or whether at the end of this tremendous development entirely new prophets will arise, or there will be a great rebirth of old ideas and ideals, or, if neither, mechanized petrification, embellished with a sort of convulsive self-importance. For of the last state of this cultural development, it might well be truly said: "Specialists without spirit, sensualists without heart; this nullity imagines that it has attained a level of civilization never before achieved." . . . The modern man is in general, even with the best will, unable to give religious ideas a significance for culture and national character which they deserve.

Max Weber would certainly have understood the efforts of the young to establish a consciousness contrary to that of bureaucratic collectivism. And he would have had no difficulty in describing Dennis Wrong's place in the American system.

STANLEY DIAMOND
New School for Social Research
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Dennis Wrong has provided a very fine perspective on the *New York Review of Books*, perhaps a little nit-picky in places, but nonetheless a much needed appraisal of a literary bludgeon.

I would like to pick two nits myself. Mr. Wrong says *NYR* did not ". . . become an extension of the underground press." Perhaps not an "extension," but certainly an ally, and as such, included in the Alternative Press Index. This quarterly index, put out by the Radical Research Center at Carleton College, in Northfield, Minnesota, indexes about 130 newspapers and periodicals of the Left. *NYR*, for all the slavish emulation of the radicals Mr. Wrong suggests, is included as a way of bringing cogent reviews and commentaries to the attention of Movement and counter-culture oriented people. What is notable about *NYR*'s inclusion in the Alternative Press Index is the fact that it is *not* included in Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature, or any other major index.

The second nit is: Later in his article, Mr. Wrong suggests that "no short summary" of the 1968 New York City public school strike (in particular the Ocean Hill-Brownsville aspect) "is possible." I trust he has read Naomi Levine's *Ocean Hill-Brownsville: A Case History of Schools in Crisis*, a paperback issued by Popular Library, which attempts to grapple with the monster that almost strangled the schools.

J. WANDRES
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I particularly admire Dennis Wrong's handling of Noam Chomsky and Murray Kempton.

His three paragraphs on Noam Chomsky say more, and say it more penetratingly, than the thousands of words Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. wrote on the same subject. Mr. Wrong's conclusion—that by the mechanical and predictable consistency of his bias Chomsky has forfeited the right to be taken seriously—seems to me so true, even obvious, that my only wonder is why it hasn't been explicitly stated before. (Poor Schlesinger, who recognized Chomsky's dishonesty as clearly as anyone, allowed himself to be lured into a detailed exploration of the intellectual Okefenokee Swamp of Chomsky's writings and wound up, in that interminable exchange of letters in COMMENTARY, sunk up to his neck in the quicksand, while Chomsky, who knows the swamp like the back of his hand from years of darting about in it, sat on the bank and peppered him with coconuts.)

In his comments on Murray Kempton, Mr. Wrong cleared up a puzzle that's been on my mind for some time. Increasingly in recent years, even when I've found myself agreeing with Kempton's ideas (that is, when I've been able to extract them from the thicket of his rhetoric), I have had the feeling in the back of my mind that there is something false in his writing, something deeper than just the precious ornateness of his style, that makes me distrust the reasoning by which he reaches his conclusions. In one short phrase Mr. Wrong perfectly defined for me what that something is: "the arrogance of proclaimed humility."

JAMES N. MILLER
Croton-on-Hudson, New York

DENNIS WRONG writes:

My question, to which Kenneth Keniston refers, was really a semi-rhetorical one, but his letter convinces me that I did not mistake his intention. I neglected to mention his statement that Kelman's fellow students ignored his arguments because I was uncertain as to whether it was seriously intended as a criticism of Kelman. Mr. Keniston now says that it was, at which I can only rub my eyes in disbelief. Why is this a criticism of *Kelman* and not of the Harvard SDS if, as Mr. Keniston acknowledges, Kelman's views and arguments were largely valid? Does he expect truth to win instant victories over error? Or, granting that Kelman is himself on occasion self-righteous, though I think Mr. Ken-

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iston exaggerates, does he suppose that if Kelman had come on all humble (like, perhaps, Murray Kempton?) he would have won the Harvard radicals to the YPSL cause?

None of us is free from self-righteousness: the very passing of a moral judgment is an implicit assertion of the superior moral sensibility of the judge. ("A man condemns himself, yet praises himself as a self-condemner."—Nietzsche.) But there is very little content except self-righteous sloganizing in the kind of New Left politics described by Kelman: no coherent political arguments, no novel diagnoses of, or prescriptions for, American social problems. And, as I tried to show, the same is true at the higher level of intellectual sophistication of the *New York Review* writers I criticized.

Mr. Keniston's last paragraph moves me to ask him another semi-rhetorical question: Is what he says not tantamount to proclaiming *pas d'ennemis à gauche*? The lessons I wished to recall were not so much those of the 30's, let alone Germany in the 30's, as of America of the late 40's and early 50's. Of course it is true today, as it was then, that "the major threats to democracy in America . . . come from the Right." This is nearly always true and in a sense may be true by definition. But putting it this way is, if I may be excused the term, too "undialectical" a way of looking at it. Would the threat from the Right that McCarthyism represented have become as formidable as it did in the absence of past apologetics for, and, in some cases, active association with, Stalinism by a large section of the Left? Mr. Keniston concedes that America today is not Germany in the early 30's. His letter is dated November 17, but since the November 3 elections one may readily doubt even that "a climate of conservatism" prevails.

In any case, I do not recognize the Maoists described by Steven Kelman as my "political neighbors," nor do I think they are any more promising as allies in "democratically seeking basic changes in our society" than, say, the Birchites. Nor am I prepared to surrender what is, after all, my duty as a political intellectual to criticize "incorrect analysis" by writers on the Left when I think I see it. I strongly oppose the political exploitation of antipathy toward student radicalism by the Agnews and Mitchells, and, *if* a Hitler loomed in the wings, I might acknowledge the necessity of limited tactical alliances with even some of the wilder New Left radicals. But Professor Keniston does not follow through with the Weimar analogy. No doubt all groups on the Left made mistakes in responding to Hitler, but it was the Communists who called the Social Democrats "social fascists" and coined slogans such as "a Nazi is like a beefsteak, brown on the outside, red on the inside." The New Left, not the Old, has echoed this line in recent years and launched attacks on the most liberal institution in our society, the university. There is reason to hope this period has ended and that criticism such as mine is increasingly obsolescent. But I'm afraid the correct answers to my two semi-rhetorical questions addressed to Mr. Keniston are in the affirmative.

I THINK the editors of the *NYR* might have made an effort to discuss the Czech liberalization earlier than they did, but that is clearly not Mr. Steel's fault. In making his minor point about deadlines, however, he ignores my criticism that he began his piece by seeking parallels with American misdeeds before getting around to reporting on the Soviet invasion, a typical example of the obsessive anti-American slant I attributed to *NYR* writers.

Mr. Steel's second point is so outrageous that it scarcely deserves an answer. Either he is being thoroughly disingenuous, or he is a monumentally careless reader, or he is incredibly ignorant. Any politically literate person must know that "un-American" has for more than thirty years been used exclusively by xenophobic or demagogic spokesmen of the Right. Even the House of Representatives recently found the term sufficiently odoriferous to change the name of the notorious committee that did most to give it currency. I have never in my life used the term "un-American" except to attack its use by others, and I did not do so in my article on the *NYR*, as Steel himself indicates in his one direct quotation from the article. The term I used was "anti-American" and I used it, not "on numerous occasions," but four times in an article of over 14,000 words, twice in a single paragraph to refer to a single *NYR* article (by Jason Epstein). I could hardly have wished thus to stigmatize *any* "criticisms of public officials and their policies" or "descriptions of the inadequacy of our social institutions" since I made such criticisms and pointed to such inadequacies myself in the course of the article and also praised the *NYR* for having done so, as in its early protests against the Vietnam war. Moreover, I twice deplored the "American celebration" of the 50's in which some intellectuals participated, and hoped that there would be no recurrence of it today.

In his own voluminous writings, Ronald Steel has often assailed the "rigid" or "sterile" anti-Communism which he sees as having banefully dominated American foreign policy since the late 40's. Suppose someone were to accuse him of derogating "anti-Communism" because he hewed to a Marxist-Leninist orthodoxy and wished to declare illegitimate any criticism of the Soviet Union, China, or Cuba, up to and including the invasion of Czechoslovakia carried out by the first and supported by the other two. I think he would, with complete justification, accuse his critic of prevarication, demagoguery, and "McCarthyism." Well, his charge against me—"shameful" and "unworthy" are his words—is of exactly the same order. Whether he made it out of malice or ignorance, I think he owes me and COMMENTARY an apology.

SINCE John Schaar, though he at least gets the word I used right, joins Mr. Steel in accusing me of "presum[ing] to judge the patriotic credentials of others," further discussion is unfortunately necessary. (Incidentally, my own "patriotic credentials" are scarcely in good order, for, though a long-time resident of the United States, I remain a citizen of Canada.) Anyway, there is nothing in the least idiosyncratic about my use of "anti-American." It has been used with exactly the same pejorative connotation by writers whose views are much closer to those of the New Left and the *NYR* than my own. For example, Martin Duberman, in a review of Christopher Lasch's *The Agony of the American Left* (most of which was first published in the *NYR*), wrote: "One quality Lasch assuredly shares with them [the radical youth], and it sets both apart from

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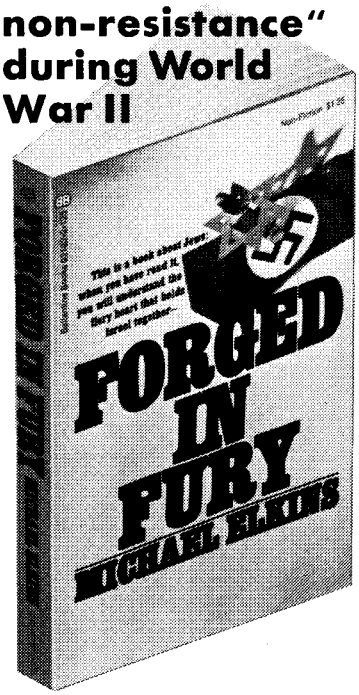

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welfare-state liberals or the N.D.C. [New Democratic Coalition], is uncompromising anti-Americanism. That attitude in the main cannot be faulted. . . . Yet, even so, the case against us can be made too all-inclusive, and Lasch is sometimes guilty of this excess" (New York *Times Book Review*, March 23, 1969, p. 34). Duberman goes on to complain of a recent "flood of anti-American books and periodicals," to deprecate "rabid anti-Americanism," and finally to conclude that "it would be tragic if radical critics, having taken the lead in challenging our country's mindless anti-Communism, encourage the substitution of mindless anti-Americanism" (*ibid.*, p. 35). Duberman's equation of "mindless" anti-Communism and anti-Americanism is almost identical with the one I made in commenting on Epstein's *NYR* article. In fairness to Christopher Lasch, whom I have criticized myself in COMMENTARY ("Radical Agonies," July 1969) but exempted specifically from some of my more recent strictures on the *NYR*, he too disparages "the anti-Americanism of the depression years" (*The Agony of the American Left*, p. 113). Whatever they may think of me, do Ronald Steel and John Schaar think that Martin Duberman and Christopher Lasch are militant patriots who regard it as "un-American" to criticize American policies and institutions?

Mr. Schaar's notion that I judge "a specimen of political discourse" by its "American" qualities because I used "anti-American" a few times as an adjective, or in noun form, is as obviously indefensible as that of a Birchite who thinks that criticisms of "anti-Communism" necessarily presuppose a pro-Communist standard of judgment. More important, while this is what Mr. Schaar would certainly like to believe, it finds no warrant whatever in what I actually wrote. For I clearly indicated my agreement with many of the beliefs he lumps together in his amalgam of alleged symptoms. (How, incidentally, does he manage to conclude that I oppose critics of environmental deterioration when my sole reference to it was to report that he himself and Sheldon Wolin had bewailed the new preoccupation of young people with this issue in the *NYR*?) Unlike Mr. Schaar, I see no reason to congratulate myself for my "dangerous" thoughts on any of these matters—what silly heroics professors do go in for!

Why, instead of dragging in the red, white, and blue herring of Americanism, doesn't Mr. Schaar address himself to my substantive criticisms, including those I made of Wolin and him? I'm afraid the answer is that he, and Ronald Steel, know only too well how such labels as "un-American" and "judging the patriotic credentials of others" "function in political discourse . . . these days" in the American academic and intellectual communities. I'm sorry I gave them the opening for their gambit, though it still seems to me that "anti-American" is the single most apt generic term to describe the *NYR*'s political outlook, better than "New Left," "radical," or "radical-liberal" (no doubt, I'd have drawn accusations that I was an agent of Agnew if I'd used that one).

I have learned much from Mr. Schaar's past writings, as he says he has from mine, especially from his argument in *Escape from Authority* that alienation is not simply a sociological condition to be overcome by political transformation, an argument that has much relevance, I should think, to some of the concerns of today's "alienated youth." I'm sad to find Mr. Schaar in *his* present ideological company, not because he deviates from some patriotic norm, but because he fails to show the scrupulous concern for intellectual rigor, the ethics of controversy, and the challenge the truth presents to all party opinions that I should have expected from him.

IN ANSWER to Mr. Packer, my "broadside" was hardly so indiscriminate as to suggest that *every* contributor to the *NYR* was "a member of the New Left or of the Radical Chic coterie." I excluded at the outset of my discussion the entire cultural and scholarly side of the journal, which may certainly be understood to cover Mr. Packer as an authority on the criminal law. I then excepted a number of writers by name from my strictures, including Messrs. Woodward and Genovese. (For further details on the names, see my answer to Michael Ebner below.) I was mistaken in indicating that Mr. Woodward had ceased since the 1967 "cut-off date" to contribute to the *NYR*, but this small error cancels out my opposite error in stat-

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ing that Mr. Laqueur was a recent contributor. Whatever their present views may be—and I am aware that Genovese has been a recent and vigorous critic of the New Left—Messrs. Genovese and Williams have in the past been identified with the New Left, Mr. Packer's inability to stretch his imagination to the contrary notwithstanding. I would welcome a change in the *NYR*'s political tendency, but I had no intention of advising any contributor "to turn his back on Mr. Silvers."

RICHARD POPKIN's queries are really directed to the editor of COMMENTARY. Since "I am not privy to the editorial decisions and policies" of COMMENTARY any more than he is to those of the *New York Review*, "I cannot comment on these."* I can only suggest that there is a difference between questioning the accuracy of the Warren Commission Report and elaborating a theory of a right-wing conspiracy. There have, after all, been critics of the Warren Report, e.g., Edward Jay Epstein, Alexander Bickel, and, most recently, Al Newman in *The Assassination of President John F. Kennedy* (Clarkson Potter, Inc., 1970), who have nevertheless accepted the Report's conclusion that Oswald was the lone assassin, if not all of the reasoning by which it arrived at this conclusion.

IN ANSWER to Mr. Ebner's letter, I have already conceded my error regarding C. Vann Woodward, which I discovered myself too late to correct on proofs. But who is Gunter Gass? Mr. Ebner presumably has in mind the German novelist, Günter Grass, but it was Oscar Gass, the American economist and political analyst, whom I mentioned. Hofstadter's death and the publication in the *NYR* of Woodward's eulogy both occurred after my article had gone to press, the latter after it had already been published. (I hope Mr. Ebner handles names and dates a bit better in his historical work than he does in his letter.) As for the eulogy, is it so uncommon for a journal to publish a eulogistic obituary of an important figure whom they may have ignored or opposed when he was alive? Mr. Ebner's argument seems to be that, in the first place, the *NYR* didn't "banish" Hofstadter, and, in the second place, if they did they were justified because "younger historians" consider him an "elitist." Well, one review in the *Nation* doesn't necessarily amount to a consensus (oops, that word!) of "younger historians," nor establish a "current historiographical trend." At Trinity College, where I have been teaching this past term, the student newspaper, *The Trinity Tripod*, devoted most of its December 8 issue to Richard Hofstadter, publishing a lengthy tribute to his work by a young historian on the faculty and two by undergraduates. Some of us, moreover, find some "younger historians" a mite elitist themselves.

As I reminded Mr. Packer, I not only excluded the *NYR*'s scholarly coverage from my strictures on its politics, but praised its valuable work of *haute vulgarisation* in a number of fields, including historical scholarship. So much for Mr. Ebner's other names. To elaborate on his example of Stephen Thernstrom, he fails to note that Thernstrom is also a contributing editor of *Dissent*. So what? I never equated the *NYR* with *Ramparts*, or even *Studies on the Left*. But does Mr. Ebner really think that the *NYR*, COMMENTARY, and *Dissent* are interchangeable where the ideological preferences of their editors are concerned?

Mr. Ebner's letter, like several of the others, makes no direct at-

* [In the editorial to which Mr. Popkin refers, written as he indicates before the Warren Commission even began its work, I called for "an independent investigation of the most scrupulous and painstaking kind that culminates in a lengthy report in which every question involved in the assassination is examined with microscopic thoroughness and according to the highest standards of judicial impartiality." I also warned that "anything less would only reinforce the ugly suspicions circulating through the air. . . ." This is exactly what happened in the event, and Mr. Popkin's theories were only one example. As for Léo Sauvage's 1964 COMMENTARY article, it differed from some of his subsequent writings on the assassination in confining itself to the raising of questions (which we all hoped at that time might in the end be satisfactorily resolved by the Warren Report) without speculating on answers for which no hard evidence existed.—N.P.]

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tempt to defend the *NYR*'s political line, nor any of the figures I criticized in detail as representative of it. They start out by simply denying that it has a political line —"nobody in there but those scholarly chickens." The *NYR* is involved with ideology, is maybe partial to the New Left? Perish the thought—there's no such thing as the New Left! Wrong is just affixing an arbitrary label. There's nothing but the young and the engaged students who are the "conscience of this country" (Diamond) and the measure of all things. I'm reminded of the sleazy chicanery of bad lawyers.

MY APOLOGIES to Walter Laqueur. I did not really think that he, nor, for that matter, the others I mentioned, were either greybeards today or stunningly precocious children forty years ago—I was merely using a bit of literary license in calling them "old Weimarians." I was also mistaken in indicating that Mr. Laqueur had been a contributor to the *New York Review* in the past two or three years.

ITHIEL DE SOLA POOL misunderstands me. I did not brand him as a "bad guy" in setting up an "either/or" polarity. My sole reference to him was a paraphrase of Noam Chomsky, who has certainly crossed swords with him on frequent occasions. My article did not deal with *present* policy toward Vietnam, and I agree that the issue of whether one is "for" or "against" the war has been decided in favor of the doves. But Mr. Pool's conviction that avoidance of the imposition of Communist terror on the South Vietnamese is the key to a peace settlement troubles me because this is exactly the argument that was used in the past to justify the war —used, in fact, by Mr. Pool himself in defense of policies that were, as he now concedes, "inept" and "violent" at best. But I did not equate Stalin's terror with the American failure in Vietnam: I merely said they had a comparable impact on the political outlook of American intellectuals. Nor do I wish to conduct a retroactive heresy-hunt to brand all past supporters of the Vietnam war, in which category I include Mr. de Sola Pool, as dangerous fools or knaves. I am not Noam Chomsky and I think there has been too much of that sort of thing in this century. Anyway, thanks for the two cheers.

STANLEY DIAMOND, ha! After penning my single reference to him, I paused and reflected that it would undoubtedly draw from him a verbose, sermonizing epistle, quoting from his own works, and full of nasty innuendos of the sort I specifically tried to avoid in my *NYR* critique, and, judging from the comments I've received even from people who don't agree with me, by and large succeeded in avoiding. Evidently I knew my man! I was tempted to mention in the article Mr. Diamond's incredibly patronizing remarks about my former and his present colleagues on the Graduate Faculty of the New School, but decided that this would be too parochial a reference.

Well, let's take up worst things first: I regret having to devote space to so petty a matter, but Mr. Diamond brought it up in accusing me of trying to ingratiate myself with Alvin Gouldner. Mr. Diamond describes Gouldner's *The Coming Crisis of Western Sociology* as an "important book," but he has not thought it important enough to have read it himself, nor has he so much as glanced at the dust jacket, or he would have discovered that I am the author of the single endorsement of the book printed there. If he had flipped a few pages, he would also have found out that Gouldner begins his list of acknowledgments in the Preface with the statement: "I am particularly grateful to Dennis Wrong for a massive critique, at once sensitive and sensible, of the entire study." I might add that I was invited by the publishers to report, for a fee, on Gouldner's manuscript and since I was enthusiastic about it, they later asked me for a public endorsement, with which I supplied them, gratis. Thus no matter how "self-serving" I may be, I hardly needed to go out of my way to curry favor with Gouldner by praising his book *en passant* in COMMENTARY. Mr. Diamond should retire to the corner and write five-hundred times: "I should not cast false aspersions on the motives of fellow intellectuals." I also expect a personal letter of apology from him. Moreover, since he doubts the accuracy of my characterization of Gouldner as a sometime defender of "academic sociology" to the younger radicals, let me refer him to the article by Gouldner that appeared, since his book, in the first issue of *Social Policy*. He might also care to inform himself on the sharp controversy this article aroused within the ranks of the "Sociology Liberation Movement." Mr. Diamond has read carelessly even my brief reference to Gouldner, for there is no inconsistency between my judgment and Bennett Berger's: I referred to Gouldner's book as an example of recent radical theorizing, but noted that he is not young, has (as he himself reports in the book) roots in the Old Left, and then commented that even Gouldner had been moved to defend sociology to younger radicals, without retracting his own radical criticisms of it. As for William Appleman Williams, he is almost universally regarded as one of the intellectual founding fathers of the New Left. So he speaks well of Herbert Hoover. Didn't I myself point out that many of the attitudes of intellectuals sympathetic to the New Left were of conservative origin?

Mr. Diamond possesses that cast of mind often found in leftist professors which compulsively attributes ideas it doesn't like to hidden, discreditable motives or even to secret conspiracies. Thus my article is "self-serving" (in exactly what way that his own writings are not?), I didn't even write it myself but it was composed by a "grievance committee" (who were its members?), I and unnamed "friends" are out to do this and that, and so on. He takes it for granted that others think the way he does and thus accuses me of attributing ("conjuring up") a "monolithic editorial policy" to the *NYR* dictated by a "well-organized, conspiratorial" New Left. But I didn't even make the initial attribution: my aim was merely to show that the *NYR*, like *Dissent* and COMMENTARY itself, does have an editorial policy, with which I proceeded to take issue. I was careful to note that there were many exceptions to the views and attitudes I criticized and, in fact, referred favorably to more than a dozen contributors by name, including several he accuses me of having ignored, e.g., Lichtheim, Arendt, O'Brien, and Lasch. The last I referred to in the identical connection in which Diamond chides me for ignoring him, as well as elsewhere (I do wish I had al-

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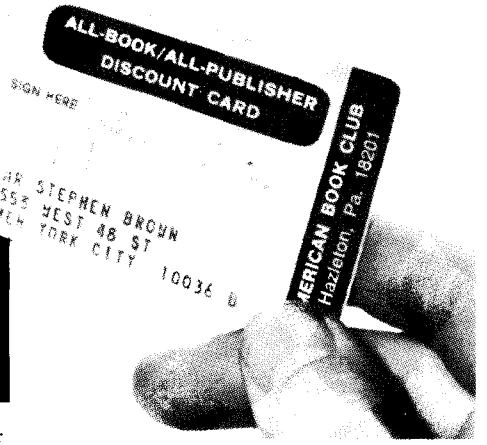

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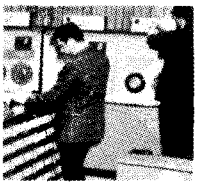

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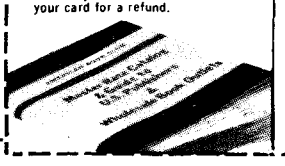

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luded to Ronald Steel at the same time, for Steel might then have refrained from accusing me of being "un-American"—I mean of charging critics of American society with being "un-American"). My intellectual debts to George Lichtheim and Hannah Arendt are, it so happens, immeasurable. I didn't mention J. M. Cameron because, as I surely made plain, I chose to confine my attention to American contributors with a very few exceptions such as Lichtheim. Is Mr. Diamond's real complaint only that I didn't mention his Biafra article?

Mr. Diamond is correct, however, in noting that I overlooked a review by Amos Elon of two books on the diplomatic background of the Six-Day War (by Walter Laqueur and Theodore Draper) which indeed appeared "more recently" than Stone's piece, though not much more recently, since it appeared in the issue of August 1, 1968. This minor error, however, scarcely invalidates my general observations about the *NYR*'s relative neglect of the Middle Eastern crisis. And if I am, as Mr. Diamond contends, "characteristically inaccurate," why is this the *sole* factual error he is able to come up with? For it is a difference of judgment, not of fact, to contend that Lichtheim, Arendt, Lasch, etc. are more typical of the *NYR* than Chomsky, Friedenberg, Schaar and Wolin, and the other contributors I chose to examine, even if one were to relegate the Kopkind-Carmichael-Hayden-"bomb-on-the-cover" period to a best-forgotten past.

Much of Mr. Diamond's letter consists of speculations and insinuations about my views on a wide variety of subjects, including "the structure of American society," the "relationship . . . between the present nature of American society and the politics of the Third World," the Bill of Rights, "Russian tyranny" and its current world aims, etc. I'm not as long-winded as Mr. Diamond and, having written on many of these subjects elsewhere, I confined myself to evaluating the *NYR*. Since I am an editor of *Dissent* and Mr. Diamond himself is listed as a contributing editor, he must have some idea what my views are, though *Dissent*, to be sure, has no "monolithic editorial policy" either. However, I'll oblige Mr. Diamond on a few points. Like his friend Conor Cruise O'Brien, I don't believe that there is a single relationship between American society and "the politics of the Third World," since I don't believe that the Third World constitutes a single, coherent entity. Yes, I subscribe to the "rationale for revolution" in the Declaration of Independence and to the defense of due process in the Bill of Rights. As for threats to the latter, I believe, to produce a trite quotation, that "eternal vigilance is the price of liberty," but I am not persuaded that due process is more "deeply threatened today" than it was in the early 50's, during World War II, or in the years immediately after World War I, let alone in the South throughout this century and earlier. I agree here with Walter Goodman's analysis in the August 1970 COMMENTARY ("The Question of Repression").

Mr. Diamond's point about the Right inventing its own Left is perhaps a symptom of pre-election jitters (his letter was written at the end of October). But if the Right is bound to invent its own provocations, then there would seem to be all the more reason for incisively and openly criticizing the delusions and inanities of the Left. Go tell this to Kenneth Keniston! Anyway, I never suggested that the Left should moderate its criticisms in order to avoid provoking backlash; it was the nature of the criticisms, their vacuity, rhetorical extravagance, elitism, and self-righteousness, to which I addressed myself. Nor was I concerned with "a handful of people in a few splinter groups," but with writers such as Chomsky, Friedenberg, and Kempton—substantial and influential spokesmen on the Left, or does Mr. Diamond think otherwise? Does he really believe, in any case, that the Right is so powerful and totalitarian in its control over American society that the rhetoric and behavior of the Left have *no* relation to the Right's strategy and tactics and the degree to which these are successful? I refer him to my answer to Mr. Keniston's letter.

I am indeed fond of quoting Max Weber—my wife said to me the other day that if I quoted Weber to her once more she would divorce me. In the long introduction I wrote to an anthology of commentaries on Weber published last November by Prentice-Hall, I quote at different points in the text the entire passage Mr. Diamond reproduces, and I was unable to refrain from quoting the phrase about "specialists without spirit, sensualists without heart" not merely once but *twice*. Weber would certainly have "understood" the efforts of the young to establish a new consciousness, but it is far from sure that he would have unreservedly supported them, let alone identified himself wholly with them. Saul Bellow's Mr. Sammler does not think so, for he recalls with approval the same passage on page 54 of *Mr. Sammler's Planet* and his own view of the "new consciousness" of the young is considerably more critical and complex (and closer to my own) than Stanley Diamond's in his *NYR* article on the New School sit-in. I shall refrain from insulting Mr. Diamond's intelligence, as he insulted mine, by reproducing passages from Weber that he must surely know, but "let me call to his attention" Weber's remarks on the romanticism of German youth in the closing paragraphs of both "Politics As a Vocation" and "Science As a Vocation," especially the latter. (We know, of course, in whose political embrace many of those youthful romantics ended up a mere decade later.) I suppose the main point of Mr. Diamond's invocation of Weber is to suggest that I am soft on "specialists without spirit"; I don't think I am, but I do think that *he* is soft on "sensualists without heart."

Crisis-Mongering

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Norman Podhoretz's major thesis ["The Idea of Crisis" November 1970] is that the "crisis-mongering" that characterizes much social criticism of late, although often masquerading as something else, is actually a means (whether conscious or unconscious) of manipulating us emotionally toward some form of police-state. In other words, those who might describe apocalyptically our movement toward totalitarianism, our loss of certain freedoms, and the rapid erosion of other freedoms, are *in fact* themselves bringing about the nightmare that they prophesy. Now this is an arguable although somewhat strange position, but Mr. Podhoretz's presentation nullifies any genuine intellectual consideration of the issues at hand. . . .

Some questions come to mind, and Mr. Podhoretz deals with

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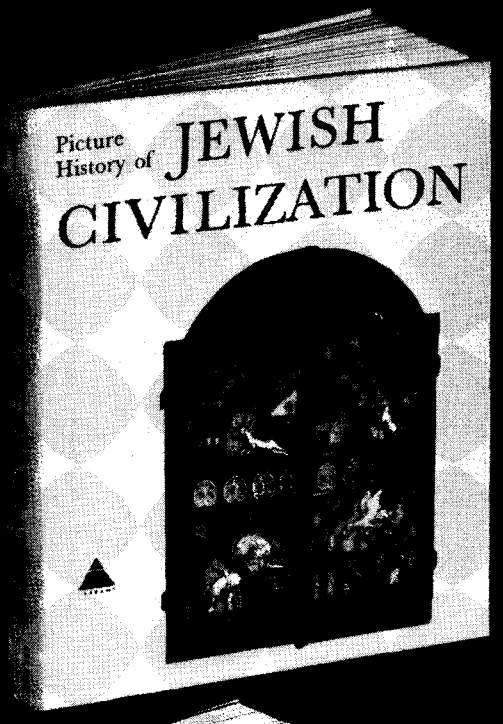

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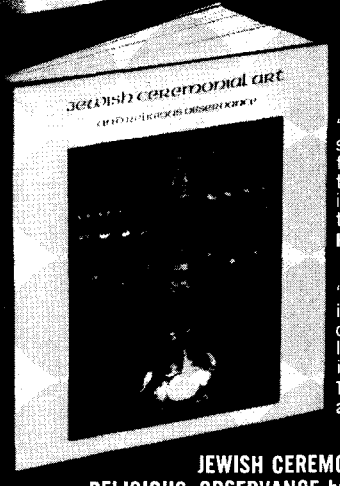

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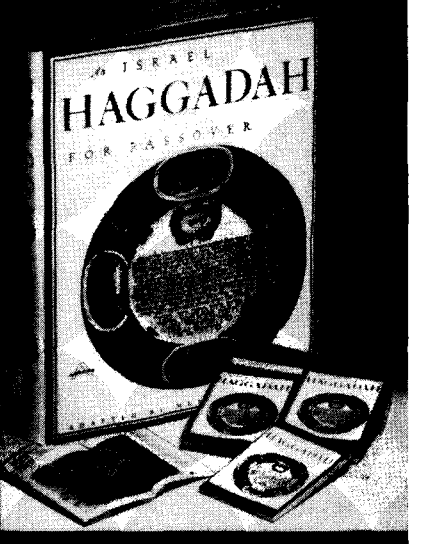

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none of them adequately: 1) Is there a *real* crisis in our society? 2) If it is partly or wholly in our minds, does that make it *unreal* (e.g., the relationship between a loss of confidence in the economy and the deterioration of the economy)? 3) When there is a crisis in society, is it always registered in the mind (e.g., Mr. Podhoretz's own lack of awareness)? 4) Most important, how is it known that those who "harp" on crisis cause demands for extraordinary action? Nowhere does Mr. Podhoretz explain this. He claims only that somehow by calling the system into question we open, perhaps unwittingly, the door to a closed society. Questioning our democracy, to Mr. Podhoretz, is akin to opening Pandora's box. To call a system antiquated (not that the authors of this letter do) is not necessarily to suggest a closed society as an alternative; it is rather, as in Robert Paul Wolff's case, to suggest that ours is not as open as it pretends. Would Mr. Podhoretz place a moratorium on all such political and social discussions? . . .

If there were a crisis in American democracy, he would never know because he is up to his neck (perhaps over his head) in his own ideology.

C. D. EPSTEIN
STEVEN R. CUSULOS
Minneapolis, Minnesota

NORMAN PODHORETZ writes:

As I tried to make clear in answer to several letters about "The Idea of Crisis" which appeared in these columns in January, my concern was, and is, to expose the political nature of the idea of crisis *in itself* and apart from whatever substantive content might be found at any particular moment to give it plausibility. I have also been trying in various ways to suggest that the political purpose of this political idea is to persuade us that extraordinary measures must be taken if our problems are to be dealt with effectively. Such extraordinary actions are not necessarily those tending toward a police-state or a totalitarian government; they may merely involve the transformation of our pluralistic democratic polity into a Gaullist-type regime or a species of modified oligarchy. Gaullism is not fascism and oligarchy is not totalitarianism, but neither are they democratic pluralism. And democratic pluralism, imperfect but nevertheless real and functioning, is what I believe we enjoy in this country and what I believe many criers of crisis hate and wish to undo. Many, not all, for some also cry crisis as a means of furthering the cause of one out-of-power faction or another within the Democratic or Republican parties.

Now to the specific questions posed by Messrs. Epstein and Cusulos: 1-2) I think our society has problems, some of them very serious, but I do not believe we are suffering, at least not yet, from a *political* crisis. If the word crisis applies at all, it applies in my view to our spiritual or cultural condition. Such a crisis by definition exists primarily in our minds (or souls) but that does not make it any the less real than any of the external conditions for which vulgar materialists exclusively reserve the designation "real." 3) Yes, I suppose it is possible for a crisis in society to go unnoticed, but in our society, it is far more likely that crises will register in the mind where only problems or troubles exist. 4) Surely the answer is obvious: If there is a crisis, then (again by definition) ordinary action has proved itself inadequate and extraordinary action is either explicitly or implicitly called for.

I have no wish to place a moratorium on any discussion of any kind, wearisome though I admittedly think some discussions have recently grown. I do wish to criticize reasoning that seems to me false and to call attention to ideas that seem to me dangerous in their political implications. The idea (echoed by Messrs. Epstein and Cusulos) that our freedoms have been eroded in recent years is an example of the former; the idea of crisis is an example of the latter.

Albert Speer: Two Views

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I have just finished reading both Albert Speer's *Inside the Third Reich* and Lucy Dawidowicz's article ["In Hitler's Service," November 1970]. . . . There is a great deal to be learned from Speer's account and confession, but Mrs. Dawidowicz is no guide. Perhaps because she is personally too close to the problem, she sees the leaders of the German Reich, and the German people themselves, as devils and criminals, and the basic problem as one of anti-Semitism. She discounts the work of such searchers as Joachim Fest who examines the psychological structure of the Nazi leaders and the movement itself, and she also dismisses the insights of Speer and others who see the problem in terms of the immense power now concentrated in the hands of politicians by technology. . . .

Twenty years ago I would have believed Mrs. Dawidowicz and accepted her apparent implication that the German people and Speer can never suffer enough for their crimes. But now I can see that the German people suffered not only from the war but from the blunders of Allied leaders who were responsible for the division of Germany. And now the Russians also persecute the Jews. Are they the same monsters as the Nazis? Another question, perhaps more important to consider today: if the problem is one of German/Jew, then what about the problem of American/Vietnamese or Arab/Jew? How can we assess the responsibility for the senseless killing and the complicity in destruction? Kennedy and Johnson escalated a small war into a world problem. How are we to assess guilt, from the President on down to the worker who fashions the napalm bombs? The old values and religious traditions were often themselves oppressive, totalitarian, and exclusive in nature. Did the Nazi leaders really fashion a new ideology or did they just use existing attitudes to give support to their power motives? I could name some American power-seekers who resemble Bormann in their ruthless pursuit of power, although they do not use anti-Semitism but instead cleverly exploit guilt feeling. The case of Speer is closed. He has paid his debt. . . . His book can now become part of an examination of the rise of totalitarian society and the problem it poses in how to preserve individual freedom and prevent disastrous concentration of power in the hands of small cliques.

LOUISE REISFELD
San Diego, California

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Albert Speer cannot be held responsible for what Himmler said about the extermination of Jews (Lucy S. Dawidowicz), nor can he be held responsible for having been called "remarkable" (Arthur Schlesinger, Jr.), "honorable" and endowed with "intellectual integrity" (C. P. Snow), and possessing a "sense of self-detachment" (J. K.

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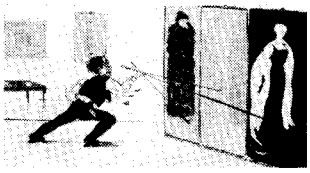

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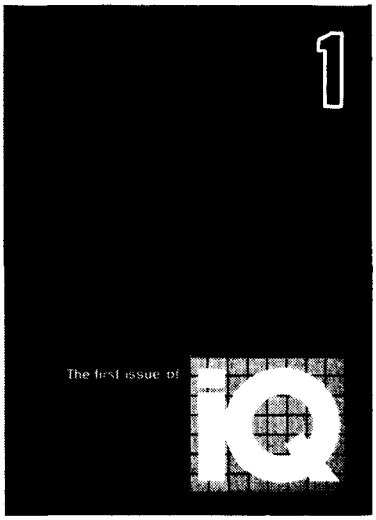

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Galbraith). But he is responsible for having given in his book a purposely limited picture of Hitler's system and a self-serving picture of himself, just as COMMENTARY is responsible for failing to dispel the false myth created around Speer. The article presented neither a true picture of the man nor an analysis of the reasons why the American public has been misled into believing that Speer is truthful and his book honest.

I find it grotesque that COMMENTARY should lend itself to the view that Speer "presents a view of [Hitler's] court . . . that no other work has yet offered." The clear implication is that Speer adds to our knowledge of the truth and that his book offers fresh and objective evidence, which is not the case in view of Schacht's *Autobiography,* Guderian's *Errinnerugen,* Schmidt's *Statist auf Diplomatischer Bühne,* and Gisevius's *Hitler* . . . to say nothing of other sources.

ELZBIETA ETTINGER

Cambridge, Massachusetts

LUCY DAWIDOWICZ writes:

From their letters it would appear that Miss Ettinger and Miss Reisfeld have read two different and contradictory reviews of mine on Albert Speer's memoirs. Miss Ettinger, exasperated by the incredibly naive and/or politically motivated reviews of Speer that appeared in the nation's press (the New York *Times,* daily and Sunday, were among the most gullible and offensive), apparently read no further in my review than the first paragraph. There I concluded that Speer's memoirs "present a view of [Hitler's] court—its routine commonplaces and its diabolic intrigues—that no other work has yet offered." From this opinion that Speer will serve as a documentary source on how Hitler ran his household and government, Miss Ettinger concludes that I must be an apologist for Speer.

Miss Reisfeld, a more careful reader, understood that I tried to confront the self-serving Speer of the memoirs with the self-asserting Speer of Nazi Germany in matters concerning anti-Semitism, Jews, and —in only a small way—slave labor. Miss Reisfeld understood also that in emphasizing the role of Nazi racial ideology in shaping the Third Reich and in rejecting Speer's claim that technology bore the culpability for Germany's crimes against humanity, I was rejecting Speer's inference that technology could and would implicate other nations in similar crimes. That was what provoked her.

Miss Reisfeld indeed makes quite explicit that undercurrent of mood and belief in the country today that turns America into "Amerika." How useful to that purpose is Speer and how important to see him as he himself would like to be seen. A man, dear reader, very like you and me. What he did, you can do; what his government did, yours does too. What Germany was to the Jews, America is now to the Vietnamese—thus Miss Reisfeld, whose shrill effusion expresses the idea implicit in those credulous reviews of which Miss Ettinget complains.

It would serve little purpose to argue with those political paranoids who claim that America is Nazi Germany reincarnated and that Harlem is Auschwitz revisited. Their apocalyptic visions (and, I suspect, hopes) are no substitute for knowledge or reason. If Miss Reisfeld is still this side of rationality, I commend to her Karl Jaspers on "The Criminal State and German Responsibility," COMMENTARY, February 1966. Jaspers distinguished between a criminal state and a state that committed crimes: "A criminal state is one which in principle neither establishes nor acknowledges the rule of law." He also distinguished between war crimes and crimes against humanity. War crimes, he wrote, were crimes against humaneness. A crime against humanity was the claim to decide "which groups of people are permitted or not permitted to live on earth, and to execute this claim through the deed of wholesale murder."

Miss Reisfeld obviously prefers the ideas she holds today to those of twenty years ago, no doubt before she had liberated herself from those "old values and religious traditions . . . often themselves oppressive, totalitarian, and exclusive in nature." Those old values and religious traditions, may I remind Miss Reisfeld, which oppressively forbid idolatry and murder, were systematically subverted by the Germans through the indoctrination of new values. Yes, the Nazis did fashion a new ideology. Miss Reisfeld may not care to dust off her old values, but since memory no longer serves her, she might dust off some books besides Speer and find out what the Third Reich was all about.

The German Left

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

"With a few major exceptions, the German intellectual Left was solidly Jewish"—such a statement could be read every day in the Nazi press, but it is amazing to find it in the pages of COMMENTARY [in Lewis D. Wurgaft's review of *Germans and Jews* by George Mosse, October 1970]. Of the 81 Communist Reichstag deputies elected in 1932 not one was a Jew; there were a few Jews among the Social Democratic leadership, but they were not what your reviewer calls "Left intellectuals"; they were establishmentarian. The opposition was formed on the one hand by a circle which called itself "Religious Socialists" and included Kurt Schumacher, the leader of the postwar SPD, and on the other hand by the Marxists who were to form the dissident SAP (Socialist Workers' Party) whose leading figures were August and Anna Siemsen, the children of a Protestant minister; other well-known Marxists of the period were the historian Paul Froehlich, the philosopher Karl Korsch, the popularizer Hermann Duncker, the poet Bertolt Brecht, the librettist Walter Mehring, and the stage-director Erwin Piscator . . . some "exceptions"!

Carl von Ossietsky and Helmuth von Gerlach were the editors of the two radical weeklies, *Die Weltbühne* and *Welt am Montag.* Your reviewer erroneously groups these with *Das Tagebuch* whose editor was Jewish but not Left; he advised his readers to vote for Hindenberg and the (Catholic) Center party. The radical monthly, *Deutsche Republik,* was edited by the Catholic writer Thormann. . . . In fact, the only Jew Mr. Wurgaft does mention was Kurt Hiller, who was indeed an intellectual, a Jew, and a homosexual; Hiller's monthly meetings, where I was an occasional guest, drew an audience of about twenty young men, none of them Jewish.

It is possible, of course, to name a number of Jews who can accurately be described as "left-wing intellectuals." This is only to be expected since Jews tended to be concentrated in the big cities, in liberal middle-class milieus, in the professions, and among theater people, musicians, and journalists —in all these areas it became fashionable to be Left-of-Center in the late 20's. But Jewish lawyers, doctors, engineers, and scientists tended

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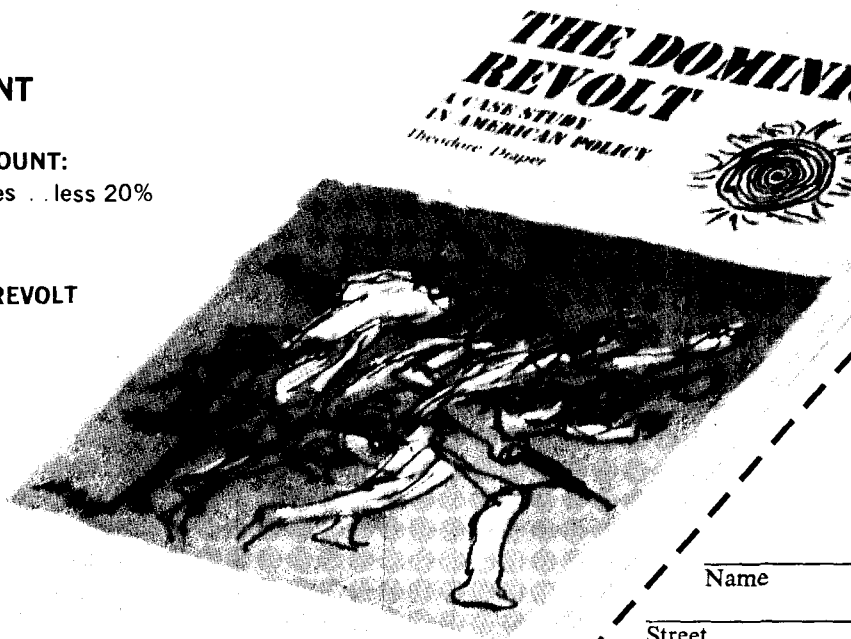

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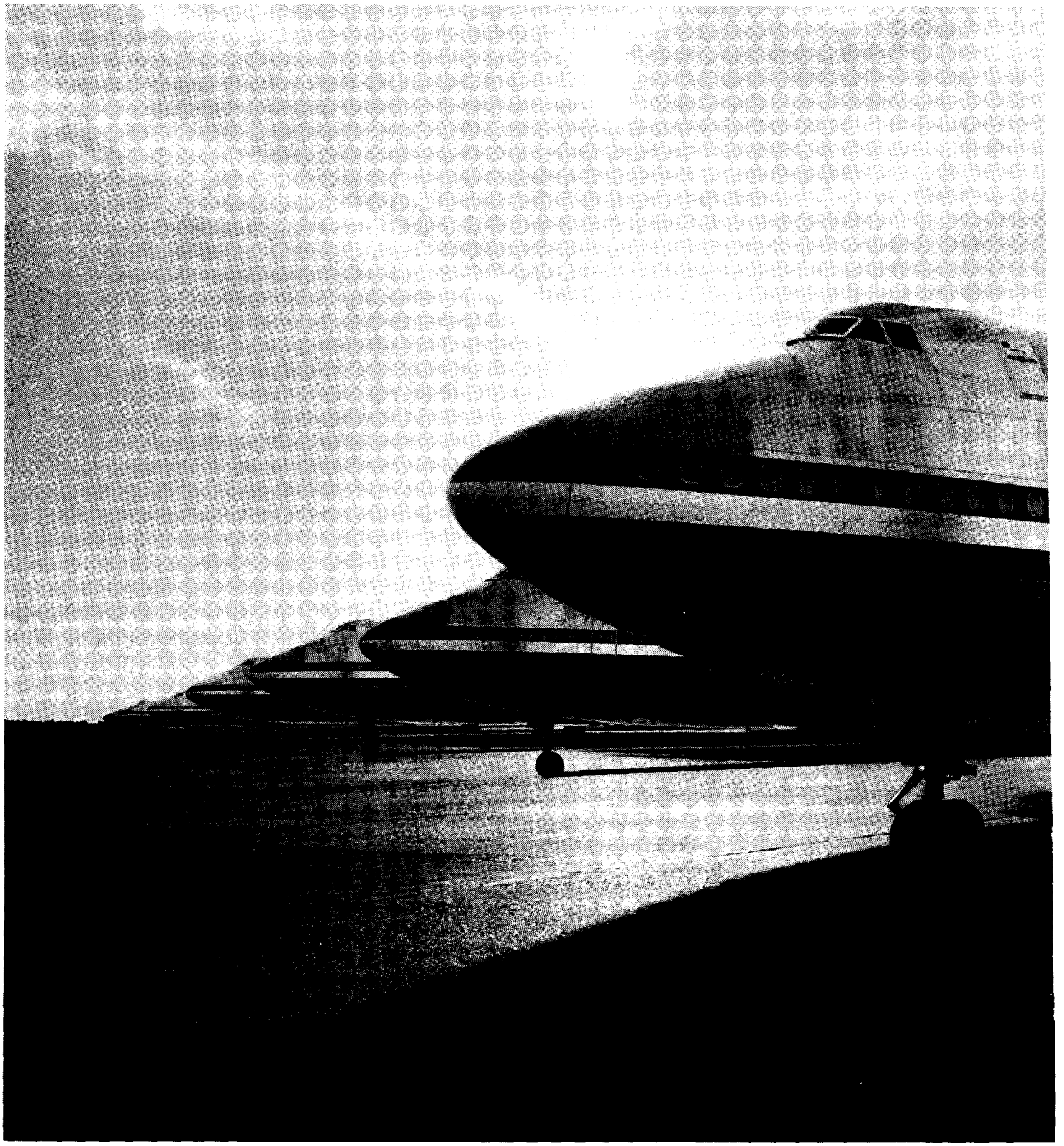

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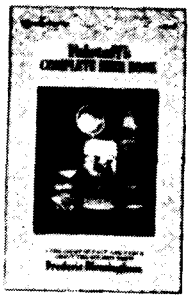

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to be establishmentarian, and those who were not Zionists adhered to the Association of the German Citizens of the Jewish Faith (which we used to stigmatize as "Jewish Citizens of the German Faith") or if they had served in the army they were members of the "Patriotic League of Jewish Veterans."

The underlying assumption of the sentence I quoted above is that German Jews were alienated; the truth is that they were assimilated, middle-class liberals. Had the Right permitted them, many Jews would have loved to have become conservatives. Those of us who turned Left did so because the choices for maneuvering within the republican framework grew narrower and narrower during the Depression, while the danger of fascism increased from election to election. But there were, after all, 7.2 million German citizens who voted Socialist and 5.9 million who voted Communist—according to your reviewer a solid Jewish majority!

No service is being done to historiography when your reviewer tries to make additional "connections between intellectuals of the Left and of the Right" by citing the *bündische* movement. In fact, there was absolutely no such connection; the youth movement split down the middle, and the Left could not accept any of the corporatist *(bündische)* ideas which became the nostrum of the Right. To become a "left-wing intellectual," I found I had to make a clean break with the romantic ideas of the youth movement. . . .

Finally, your reviewer seems to believe that German Jews accepted the Nazi dichotomy of "Aryan" rootedness and "Jewish" rootlessness. As any reader of Hegel or the German romantics knows, this was not a Jewish problem but a problem of modern industrial society. Among Jewish youth the "back to the racial soil" idea took the form of Zionism and among non-Jewish youth it became Nazism. But it was not a problem either of Jewish or of non-Jewish left-wing intellectuals. They were "individualistic" wherever they were creators, thinkers, critics, or where there was any reason to voice dissent. In making themselves spokesmen for the opposition, they were not "rootless" but communicated with that part of the nation which they felt represented the future. . . .

HENRY M. PACHTER
New York City

LEWIS WURGAFT writes:

Henry Pachter's effort to deny the close connection between Jewishness and the intellectual Left disregards the facts of the matter, and wilfully distorts the definition of that group offered in my review. There, following Professor Mosse's lead, I described these intellectuals as journalists and creative writers who were non-Marxists, or opponents of the major Marxist parties of the German Left. On these grounds, many of the non-Jews whom Mr. Pachter mentions do not even qualify as part of the intellectual Left, including the 81 Communist Reichstag deputies. Mr. Pachter goes on to point out that the overwhelming majority of German Jews were middle class and establishmentarian. This is certainly correct, but quite off the subject. No effort was made in my review to assess the political views of German Jewry as a whole—to say nothing of Mr. Pachter's ludicrous contention that I described the Socialist and Communist vote in Germany as consisting of a "solid Jewish majority."

Mr. Pachter performs a service by pointing out a few more exceptions to the Jewish dominance of the intellectual Left, but his statements mislead as much as they enlighten. . . . While Mr. Pachter implies that there were no Jews in Kurt Hiller's circle, his closest associates in the activist movement, men like Ludwig Rubiner, Rudolf Kayser, and Alfred Wolfenstein, were all Jewish. Though Carl von Ossietsky was not Jewish, the *Weltbühne*'s two other editors during the Weimar period, Siegfried Jacobsohn and Kurt Tucholsky, were. Indeed, in *Weimar Germany's Left-Wing Intellectuals* Istvan Deak shows that two-thirds of the major contributors to the journal were of Jewish origin. . . .

Even after this issue has been clarified, what remains disturbing is Mr. Pachter's effort to conceal the radicalism of so many German-Jewish intellectuals behind the more moderate politics of Jewish businessmen and professionals. In this respect, Mr. Pachter is himself guilty of a disservice to historiography. The connection between Jewishness and the intellectual Left was a major factor in the cultural life of Weimar, as it is in the United States today. As a phenomenon that has never received adequate scholarly attention, it needs to be understood, not hidden.

Mr. Pachter's other objections

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are more difficult to deal with adequately in this limited space. Basically, they reflect too rigid a distinction on his part between the conservatism and romanticism of the intellectual Right, and the individualism of the intellectual Left. As Mosse has established, and as my own research confirms, the left-wing intellectuals hoped to articulate a humane socialism which would counteract the dogmatism and materialism of the major Marxist parties. Their individualism was tempered by a yearning for community, or *Gemeinschaft,* which could enhance the spiritual character of modern life. In order to reconcile these conflicting needs, the intellectual Left drew upon many aspects of the German cultural tradition, including the *bündische* concept. One could also cite the elitist implications of the idealist tradition, or the romanticism that found an outlet in literary expressionism. Mr. Pachter is generally correct in his negative appraisal of the youth movement as a conduit of these ideas to the intellectual Left. Yet the activist movement under Kurt Hiller had more success. . . .In short, the political attitudes of the intellectual Left had complex philosophical and aesthetic roots which tended to qualify its attitude toward individualism.

Errata

A number of unfortunate typographical errors occurred on page 92 of the February number, in David Bromwich's review of *The Voice That Is Great Within Us.*

In the clause: ". . . the idea has something to do with laying bare the mind of the poet showing the process of raw creation at work," a comma should apppear after the word *poet.*

For "discarded and slightly garrulous wit" read: *disordered and slightly garrulous wit.*

For "highclass gothic" read: *high-class gossip.*

For "a third interpolation" read: *a third edition.*

For "first two additions" read: *first two editions.*

Also, on page 39 of Walter Laqueur's article in the February number, the denunciation of King Ahab should have been ascribed to *Elijah,* not Isaiah.

On Page 54 of Robert Alter's article, the quip about the Bundists should have been ascribed to *Plekhanov,* not Lenin.

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The Presidency & the Press

Daniel P. Moynihan

As his years in Washington came to an end, Harry S. Truman wrote a friend:

> I really look with commiseration over the great body of my fellow citizens, who, reading newspapers, live and die in the belief that they have known something of what has been passing in the world in their time.

A familiar Presidential plaint, sounded often in the early years of the Republic and rarely unheard thereafter. Of late, however, a change has developed in the perception of what is at issue. In the past what was thought to be involved was the reputation of a particular President. In the present what is seen to be at stake, and by the Presidents themselves, is the reputation of government—especially, of course, Presidential government. These are different matters, and summon a different order of concern.

There are two points anyone would wish to make at the outset of an effort to explore this problem. First, it is to be acknowledged that in most essential encounters between the Presidency and the press, the advantage is with the former. The President has a near limitless capacity to "make" news which must be reported, if only by reason of competition between one journal, or one medium, and another. (If anything, radio and television news is more readily subject to such dominance. Their format permits of many fewer "stories." The President-in-action almost always takes precedence.) The President also has considerable capacity to reward friends and punish enemies in the press corps, whether they be individual journalists or the papers, television networks, news weeklies, or whatever these individuals work for. And for quite a long while, finally, a President who wishes can carry off formidable deceptions. (One need only recall the barefaced lying that went with the formal opinion of Roosevelt's Attorney General that the destroyer-naval-base deal of 1940 was legal.)

With more than sufficient reason, then, publishers and reporters alike have sustained over the generations a lively sense of their vulnerability to governmental coercion or control. For the most part, their worries have been exaggerated. But, like certain virtues, there are some worries that are best carried to excess.

The second point is that American journalism is almost certainly the best in the world. This judgment will be disputed by some. There are good newspapers in other countries. The *best* European journalists are more intellectual than their American counterparts, and some will think this a decisive consideration. But there is no enterprise anywhere the like of the New York *Times*. Few capitals are covered with the insight and access of the Washington *Post* or the Washington *Evening Star*. As with so many American institutions, American newspapers tend to be older and more stable than their counterparts abroad. The Hartford *Courant* was born in 1764, twenty-one years before the *Times* of London. The New York *Post* began publication in 1801, twenty years before the *Guardian* of Manchester. What in most other countries is known as the "provincial" press—that is to say journals published elsewhere than in the capital—in America is made up of a wealth of comprehensive and dependable daily newspapers of unusually high quality.

The journalists are in some ways more important than their journals—at least to anyone who has lived much in government. A relationship grows up with the reporters covering one's particular sector that has no counterpart in other professions or activities. The relationship is one of simultaneous trust and distrust, friendship and enmity, dependence and independence. But it is the men of government, especially in Washington, who are the more dependent. The journalists are their benefactors, their conscience, at times almost their reason for being. For the journalists are above all others their audience, again especially in Washington, which has neither an intellectual community nor an electorate, and where there is no force outside government able to judge events, much less to help shape them, save the press.

That there is something wondrous and terrible in the intensities of this relationship between the press and the government is perhaps best

Daniel P. Moynihan was a member of the Sub-Cabinet of Presidents Kennedy and Johnson and—until his return to Harvard earlier this year—of the Cabinet of President Nixon. The author of *Maximum Feasible Misunderstanding* and (with Nathan Glazer) *Beyond the Melting Pot*, he has been a frequent contributor to Commentary for the past ten years.

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seen at the annual theatricals put on by such groups of journalists as the Legislative Correspondents Association in Albany or the Gridiron in Washington. To my knowledge nothing comparable takes place anywhere else in the world. These gatherings are a kind of ritual truth telling, of which the closest psychological approximation would be the Calabrian insult ritual described by Roger Vailland in his novel *The Law*, or possibly the group-therapy practices of more recent origin. The politicians come as guests of the journalists. The occasion is first of all a feast: the best of everything. Then as dinner progresses the songs begin. The quality varies, of course, but at moments startling levels of deadly accurate commentary of great cruelty are achieved. The politicians sit and smile and applaud. Then some of them speak. Each one wins or loses to the degree that he can respond in kind; stay funny and be brutal. (At the Gridiron John F. Kennedy was a master of the style, but the piano duet performed by Nixon and Agnew in 1970 was thought by many to have surpassed anything yet done.) A few lyrics appear in the next day's papers, but what the newspapermen really said to the politicians remains privileged—as does so much of what the politicians say to them. The relationship is special.

How is it then that this relationship has lately grown so troubled? The immediate answer is, of course, the war in Vietnam. An undeclared war, unwanted, misunderstood, or not understood at all, it entailed a massive deception of the American people by their government. Surely a large area of the experience of the 1960's is best evoked in the story of the man who says: "They told me that if I voted for Goldwater there would be 500,000 troops in Vietnam within a year. I voted for him, and, by God, they were right." The story has many versions. If he voted for Goldwater we would be defoliating the countryside of Vietnam; the army would be sending spies to the 1968 party conventions; Dr. Spock would be indicted on conspiracy charges; and so on. By 1968 Richard Rovere described the capital as "awash" with lies.

The essential fact was that of deceit. How else to carry out a full-scale war that became steadily more unpopular with none of the legally-sanctioned constraints on the free flow of information which even the most democratic societies find necessary in such circumstances? This situation did not spring full-blown from the involvement in Southeast Asia. It was endemic to the cold war. At the close of World War II official press censorship was removed, but the kinds of circumstance in which any responsible government might feel that events have to be concealed from the public did not go away. The result was a contradiction impossible to resolve. The public interest was at once served and dis-served by secrecy; at once dis-served and served by openness. Whatever the case, distrust of government grew. At the outset of the U-2 affair in 1960, the United States government asserted that a weather plane on a routine mission had been shot down. The New York *Times* (May 6, 1960) reported just that. *Not* that the U.S. government *claimed* it was a weather plane, but simply that it was. Well, it wasn't. Things have not been the same since.

But there are problems between the Presidency and the press which have little to do with the cold war or with Vietnam and which—if this analysis is correct—will persist or even intensify should those conditions recede, or even dissolve, as a prime source of public concern. The problems flow from five basic circumstances which together have been working to reverse the old balance of power between the Presidency and the press. It is the thesis here that if this balance should tip too far in the direction of the press, our capacity for effective democratic government will be seriously and dangerously weakened.

I

The first of these circumstances has to do with the tradition of "muckraking"—the exposure of corruption in government or the collusion of government with private interests—which the American press has seen as a primary mission since the period 1880-1914. It is, in Irving Kristol's words, "a journalistic phenomenon that is indigenous to democracy, with its instinctive suspicion and distrust of all authority in general, and of concentrated political and economic power especially." Few would want to be without the tradition, and it is a young journalist of poor spirit who does not set out to uncover the machinations of some malefactor of great wealth and his political collaborators. Yet there is a cost, as Roger Starr suggests in his wistful wish that Lincoln Steffens's *The Shame of the Cities* might be placed on the restricted shelves of the schools of journalism. Steffens has indeed, as Starr declares, continued "to haunt the city rooms of the country's major newspapers." The question to be asked is whether, in the aftermath of Steffens, the cities were better, or merely more ashamed of themselves. Looking back, one is impressed by the energy and capacity for governance of some of the old city machines. Whatever else, it was popular government, of and by men of the people. One wonders: did the middle- and upper-class reformers destroy the capacity of working-class urban government without replacing it with anything better so that half-a-century later each and all bewail the cities as ungovernable? One next wonders whether something not dissimilar will occur now that the focus of press attention has shifted from City Hall to the White House. (And yet a miracle

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of American national government is the almost complete absence of monetary corruption at all levels, and most especially at the top.)

The muckraking tradition is well established. Newer, and likely to have far more serious consequences, is the advent of what Lionel Trilling has called the "adversary culture" as a conspicuous element in journalistic practice. The appearance in large numbers of journalists shaped by the attitudes of this culture is the result of a process whereby the profession thought to improve itself by recruiting more and more persons from middle- and upper-class backgrounds and trained at the universities associated with such groups. This is a change but little noted as yet. The stereotype of American newspapers is that of publishers ranging from conservative to reactionary in their political views balanced by reporters ranging from liberal to radical in theirs. One is not certain how accurate the stereotype ever was. One's impression is that twenty years and more ago the preponderance of the "working press" (as it liked to call itself) was surprisingly close in origins and attitudes to working people generally. They were not Ivy Leaguers. They now are or soon will be. Journalism has become, if not an elite profession, a profession attractive to elites. This is noticeably so in Washington where the upper reaches of journalism constitute one of the most important and enduring *social* elites of the city, with all the accoutrements one associates with a leisured class. (The Washington press corps is not leisured at all, but the style is that of men and women who *choose* to work.)

The political consequence of the rising social status of journalism is that the press grows more and more influenced by attitudes genuinely hostile to American society and American government. This trend seems bound to continue into the future. On the record of what they have been writing while in college, the young people now leaving the Harvard *Crimson* and the Columbia *Spectator* for journalistic jobs in Washington will resort to the Steffens style at ever-escalating levels of moral implication. They bring with them the moral absolutism of George Wald's vastly popular address, "A Generation in Search of a Future," that describes the Vietnam war as "the most shameful episode in the whole of American history." Not tragic, not heartbreaking, not vastly misconceived, but *shameful*. From the shame of the cities to the shame of the nation. But nobody ever called Boss Croker any name equivalent in condemnatory weight to the epithet "war criminal."

II

An ironical accompaniment of the onset of the muckraking style directed toward the Presidency has been the rise of a notion of the near-omnipotency of the office itself. This notion Thomas E. Cronin describes as the "textbook President." Cronin persuasively argues that in the aftermath of Franklin Roosevelt a view of the Presidency, specifically incorporated in the textbooks of recent decades, was developed which presented seriously "inflated and unrealistic interpretations of Presidential competence and beneficence," and which grievously "overemphasized the policy change and policy accomplishment capabilities" of the office. Cronin cites Anthony Howard, a watchful British commentator:

> For what the nation has been beguiled into believing ever since 1960 is surely the politics of evangelism: the faith that individual men are cast to be messiahs, the conviction that Presidential incantations can be substituted for concrete programs, the belief that what matters is not so much the state of the nation as the inspiration-quotient of its people.

In his own researches among advisers of Kenedy and Johnson, Cronin finds the majority to hold "tempered assessments of Presidential determination of 'public policy.'" Indeed, only 10 per cent would describe the President as having "very great impact" over such matters.

Working in the White House is a chastening experience. But it is the experience of very few persons. Watching the White House, on the other hand, is a mass occupation, concentrated especially among the better-educated, better-off groups. For many the experience is one of infatuation followed much too promptly by disillusion. First, the honeymoon—in Cronin's terms, the "predictable ritual of euphoric inflation." But then "the Camelot of the first few hundred days of all Presidencies fades away. . . . Predictably, by the second year, reports are spread that the President has become isolated from criticism." If this is so, he has only himself to blame when things go wrong. And things do go wrong.

If the muckraking tradition implies a distrust of government, it is nonetheless curiously validated by the overly trusting tradition of the "textbook Presidency" which recurrently sets up situations in which the Presidency will be judged as having somehow broken faith. This is not just the experience of a Johnson or a Nixon. Anyone who was in the Kennedy administration in the summer and fall of 1963 would, or ought to, report a pervasive sense that our initiative had been lost, that we would have to get reelected to get going again.

Here, too, there is a curious link between the Presidency and the press. The two most important *Presidential* newspapers are the New York *Times* and the Washington *Post* (though the *Star* would be judged by many to have the best reporting). Both papers reflect a tradition of liberalism that has latterly been shaped and rein-

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forced by the very special type of person who *buys* the paper. (It is well to keep in mind that newspapers are capitalist enterprises which survive by persuading people to buy them.) Theirs is a "disproportionately" well-educated and economically prosperous audience. The geographical areas in which the two papers circulate almost certainly have higher per-capita incomes and higher levels of education than any of comparable size in the nation or the world. More of the buyers of these two papers are likely to come from "liberal" Protestant or Jewish backgrounds than would be turned up by a random sample of the population; they comprise, in fact, what James Q. Wilson calls "the Liberal Audience."* Both the working-class Democrats and the conservative Republicans, with exceptions, obviously, have been pretty much driven from office among the constituencies where the *Times* and the *Post* flourish. It would be wrong to ascribe this to the influence of the papers. Causality almost certainly moves both ways. Max Frankel of the *Times*, who may have peers, but certainly no betters as a working journalist, argues that a newspaper is surely as much influenced by those who read it as vice versa.

The readers of the New York *Times* and the Washington *Post*, then, are a special type of citizen: not only more affluent and more liberal than the rest of the nation, but inclined also to impose heavy expectations on the Presidency, and not to be amused when those expectations fail to be met. Attached by their own internal traditions to the "textbook Presidency," papers like the *Times* and the *Post* are reinforced in this attachment by the temperamental predilections of the readership whose character they inevitably reflect. Thus they help to set a tone of pervasive dissatisfaction with the performance of the national government, whoever the Presidential incumbent may be and whatever the substance of his policies.

III

A THIRD circumstance working to upset the old balance of power between the Presidency and the press is the fact that Washington reporters depend heavily on more or less clandestine information from federal bureaucracies which are frequently, and in some cases routinely, antagonistic to Presidential interests.

There is a view of the career civil service as a more or less passive executor of policies made on high. This is quite mistaken. A very great portion of policy ideas "bubble up" from the bureaucracy, and just as importantly, a very considerable portion of the "policy decisions" that go down never come to anything, either because the bureaucrats cannot or will not follow through. (The instances of simple inability are probably much greater than those of outright hostility.) Few modern Presidents have made any impact on the federal bureaucracies save by creating new ones. The bureaucracies are unfamiliar and inaccessible. They are quasi-independent, maintaining, among other things, fairly open relationships with the Congressional committees that enact their statutes and provide their funds. They are usually willing to work with the President, but rarely to the point where their perceived interests are threatened. Typically, these are rather simple territorial interests: not to lose any jurisdiction, and if possible to gain some. But recurrently, issues of genuine political substance are also involved.

At the point where they perceive a threat to those interests, the bureaucracies just as recurrently go to the press. They know the press; the press knows them. Both stay in town as Presidential governments come and go. Both cooperate in bringing to bear the most powerful weapons the bureaucracies wield in their own defense, that of revealing Presidential plans in advance of their execution. Presidents and their plans are helpless against this technique. I have seen a senior aide to a President, sitting over an early morning cup of coffee, rise and literally punch the front page of the New York *Times*. A major initiative was being carefully mounted. Success depended, to a considerable degree, on surprise. Someone in one of the agencies whose policies were to be reversed got hold of the relevant document and passed it on to the *Times*. Now everyone would know. The mission was aborted. There was *nothing* for the Presidential government to do. No possibility of finding, much less of disciplining, the bureaucrat responsible. For a time, or rather from time to time, President Johnson tried the technique of *not* going ahead with any policy or appointment that was leaked in advance to the press. Soon, however, his aides began to suspect that this was giving the bureaucracy the most powerful weapon of all, namely the power to veto a Presidential decision by learning of it early enough and rushing to the *Times* or the *Post*. (Or, if the issue could be described in thirty seconds, any of the major television networks.)

What we have here is disloyalty to the Presidency. Much of the time what is involved is no more than the self-regard of lower-echelon bureaucrats who are simply flattered into letting the reporter know how much *they* know, or who are just trying to look after their agency. But just as often, to repeat, serious issues of principle are involved. Senator Joseph McCarthy made contact with what he termed "the loyal American underground"—State Department officials, and other such, who reputedly passed on infor-

* See his article, "Crime and the Liberal Audience" in COMMENTARY, January 1971.

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mation to him about Communist infiltration of the nation's foreign-policy and security systems. President Johnson made it clear that he did not trust the Department of State to maintain "security" in foreign policy. Under President Nixon the phenomenon has been most evident in domestic areas as OEO warriors struggle among themselves to be the first to disclose the imminent demise of VISTA, or HEW functionaries reluctantly interpret a move to close some fever hospital built to accommodate an 18th-century seaport as the first step in a master plan to dismantle public medicine and decimate the ranks of the elderly and disadvantaged.

It is difficult to say whether the absolute level of such disloyalty to the Presidency is rising. One has the impression that it is. No one knows much about the process of "leaking" except in those instances where he himself has been involved. (*Everyone* is sooner or later involved. That should be understood.) The process has not been studied and little is known of it. But few would argue that the amount of clandestine disclosure is decreasing. Such disclosure is now part of the way we run our affairs. It means, among other things, that the press is fairly continuously involved in an activity that is something less than honorable. Repeatedly it benefits from the self-serving acts of government officials who are essentially hostile to the Presidency. This does the Presidency no good, and if an outsider may comment, it does the press no good either. Too much do they traffic in stolen goods, and they know it.

This point must be emphasized. The leaks which appear in the *Post* and the *Times*—other papers get them, but if one wants to influence decisions in Washington these are clearly thought to be the most effective channels—are ostensibly published in the interest of adding to public knowledge of what is going on. This budget is to be cut; that man is to be fired; this bill is to be proposed. However, in the nature of the transaction the press can only publish half the story—that is to say the information that the "leaker" wants to become "public knowledge." What the press *never* does is say who the leaker is and why he wants the story leaked. Yet, more often than not, this is the more important story: that is to say, what policy wins if the one being disclosed loses, what individual, what bureau, and so on.

There really are ethical questions involved here that have not been examined. There are also serious practical questions. It would be my impression that the distress occasioned by leaks has used up too much Presidential energy, at least from the time of Roosevelt. (Old-time brain-trusters would assure the Johnson staff that nothing could compare with FDR's distractions on the subject.) The primary fault lies within government itself, and one is at a loss to think of anything that might be done about it. But it is a problem for journalism as well, and an unattended one.

IV

THE FOURTH of the five conditions making for an altered relation between the Presidency and the press is the concept of objectivity with respect to the reporting of events and especially the statements of public figures. Almost the first canon of the great newspapers, and by extension of the television news networks which by and large have taken as their standards those of the best newspapers, is that "the news" will be reported whether or not the reporter or the editor or the publisher likes the news. There is nothing finer in the American newspaper tradition. There is, however, a rub and it comes when a decision has to be made as to whether an event really is news, or simply a happening, a non-event staged for the purpose of getting into the papers or onto the screen.

The record of our best papers is not reassuring here, as a glance at the experience of the Korean and the Vietnam wars will suggest. Beginning a bit before the Korean hostilities broke out, but in the general political period we associate with that war, there was a rise of right-wing extremism, a conspiracy-oriented politics symbolized by the name of Senator Joseph McCarthy, and directed primarily at the institution of the Presidency. There was, to be sure, a populist streak to this movement: Yale and Harvard and the "striped-pants boys" in the State Department were targets too. But to the question, "Who promoted Peress?" there was only one constitutional or—for all practical purposes—political answer, namely that the President did. McCarthy went on asking such questions, or rather making such charges, and the national press, which detested and disbelieved him throughout, went on printing them. The American style of objective journalism made McCarthy. He would not, I think, have gotten anywhere in Great Britain where, because it would have been judged he was lying, the stories would simply not have been printed.

Something not dissimilar has occurred in the course of the Vietnam war, only this time the extremist, conspiracy-oriented politics of protest has been putatively left-wing. Actually both movements are utterly confusing if one depends on European analogues. McCarthy was nominally searching out Communists, but his preferred targets were Eastern patricians, while his supporters were, to an alarming degree, members of the Catholic working class. The Students for a Democratic Society, if that organization may be used as an exemplar, was (at least in its later stages) nominally revolutionist, dedicated to the overthrow of the capitalist-imperialist-fascist regime of the United States. Yet, as Seymour Mar-

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tin Lipset, Nathan Glazer, and others have shown, its leadership, and perhaps also its constituency, were disproportionately made up of upper-class Jewish and Protestant youth. By report of Steven Kelman, who lived as a contemporary among them at Harvard, the SDS radicals were "undemocratic, manipulative, and self-righteous to the point of snobbery and elitism." Peter Berger, a sociologist active in the peace movement, has demonstrated quite persuasively —what others, particularly persons of European origin like himself have frequently seemed to sense —that despite the leftist ring of the slogans of SDS and kindred groups, their ethos and tactics are classically fascist: the cult of youth, the mystique of the street, the contempt for liberal democracy, and the "totalization of friend and foe [with] the concomitant dehumanization of the latter," as in the Nazi use of "*Saujuden*" ("Jewish pigs").

In any case, the accusations which have filled the American air during the period of Vietnam have been no more credible or responsible than those of McCarthy during the Korean period, and the tactics of provocation and physical intimidation have if anything been more disconcerting. Yet the national press, and especially television, have assumed a neutral posture, even at times a sympathetic one, enabling the neo-fascists of the Left to occupy center stage throughout the latter half of the 60's with consequences to American politics that have by no means yet worked themselves out. (It took Sam Brown to point out that one consequence was to make the work of the anti-war movement, of which he has been a principal leader, vastly more difficult.)

Would anyone have it otherwise? Well, yes. Irving Kristol raised this question in an article that appeared before the New Left had made its presence strongly felt on the national scene, but his views are doubtless even more emphatic by now. He wrote of the "peculiar mindlessness which pervades the practice of journalism in the United States," asserting that the ideal of objectivity too readily becomes an excuse for avoiding judgment. If McCarthy was lying, why print what he said? Or why print it on the front page? If the SDS stages a confrontation over a trumped-up issue, why oblige it by taking the whole episode at face value? Here, let it be said, the editorials of the *Times* and the *Post* have consistently served as a thoughtful corrective to the impressions inescapably conveyed by the news columns. But the blunt fact is that just as the news columns were open to astonishingly false assertions about the nature of the American national government during the McCarthy period, they have been open to equally false assertions—mirror images of McCarthyism indeed—during the period of Vietnam. And although it is impossible to prove, one gets the feeling that the slanderous irresponsibilities now being reported so dutifully are treated with far more respect than the old.

The matter of a policy of "genocide" pursued by the national government against the Black Panthers is a good example. By late 1969, preparing a preface to a second edition of *Beyond the Melting Pot*, Nathan Glazer and I could insist that the charge that twenty-eight Panthers had been murdered by the police was on the face of it simply untrue. Yet in that mindless way of which Kristol writes, the *Times* kept reprinting it. Edward Jay Epstein has brilliantly explained the matter in a recent article in the *New Yorker*. What he finds is an immense fraud. No such policy existed. There was no conspiracy between the Department of Justice, the FBI, and various local police forces to wipe out the Panthers. Yet that fraudulent charge has so profoundly affected the thinking of the academic and liberal communities that they will probably not even now be able to see the extent to which they were deceived. The hurt that has been done to blacks is probably in its way even greater. None of it could have happened without the particular mind-set of the national press.

If the press is to deserve our good opinion, it must do better in such matters. And it should keep in mind that the motivation of editors and reporters is not always simply and purely shaped by a devotion to objectivity. In the course of the McCarthy era James Reston recalled the ancient adage which translated from the Erse proposes that "If you want an audience, start a fight." This is true of anyone who would find an audience for his views, or simply for himself. It is true also of anyone who would find customers for the late city edition. T. S. Matthews, sometime editor of *Time*, retired to England to ponder the meaning of it all. In the end, all he could conclude was that the function of journalism was entertainment. If it is to be more—and that surely is what the Rosenthals and Bradlees and Grunwalds and Elliotts want—it will have to be willing on occasion to forgo the entertainment value of a fascinating but untruthful charge. It will, in short, have to help limit the rewards which attend this posture in American politics.

V

THE FINAL, and by far the most important, circumstance of American journalism relevant to this discussion is the absence of a professional tradition of self-correction. The mark of any developed profession is the practice of correcting mistakes, by whomsoever they are made. This practice is of course the great invention of Western science. Ideally, it requires an epistemology which is shared by all respected members of the profession, so that when a mistake is discovered it can

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be established as a mistake to the satisfaction of the entire professional community. Ideally, also, no discredit is involved: to the contrary, honest mistakes are integral to the process of advancing the field. Journalism will never attain to any such condition. Nevertheless, there is a range of subject matter about which reasonable men can and will agree, and within this range American journalism, even of the higher order, is often seriously wide of the mark. Again Irving Kristol:

> It is a staple of conversation among those who have ever been involved in a public activity that when they read the *Times* the next morning, they will discover that it has almost never got the story quite right and has only too frequently got it quite wrong.

Similar testimony has come from an editor of the New York *Times* itself. In an article published some years ago in the Sunday *Times Magazine*, A. H. Raskin had this to say:

> No week passes without someone prominent in politics, industry, labor or civic affairs complaining to me, always in virtually identical terms: "Whenever I read a story about something in which I really know what is going on, I'm astonished at how little of what is important gets into the papers—and how often even that little is wrong." The most upsetting thing about these complaints is the frequency with which they come from scientists, economists and other academicians temporarily involved in government policy but without any proprietary concern about who runs the White House or City Hall.*

This is so, and in part it is unavoidable. Too much happens too quickly: that the *Times* or the *Post* or the *Star* should appear once a day is a miracle. (Actually they appear three or four times a day in different editions.) But surely when mistakes are made they ought to be corrected. Sometimes they are, but not nearly enough. It is in this respect that Kristol is right in calling journalism "the underdeveloped profession."

Assertions that the press has a flawed sense of objectivity, or that it enjoys too cozy a relationship with the civil service, are not easily proved or disproved. But to say that mistakes are repeatedly made and not corrected is to say something which ought to be backed up with specific instances. Let me, then, offer two, taken from stories which appeared in the New York *Times* during the second half of 1970. (I was serving in the White House at the time, though I was not directly involved in any of the matters to be described.)

THE FIRST of my two examples is a long article which appeared in the *Times* on Sunday, November 15, 1970 under the headline, "Blacks Seek Tougher Equality Standards for Federal Hiring and Promotion." This story was not hostile to the administration; rather the contrary. It noted that the President had earlier signed an executive order requiring each department and agency to maintain an "affirmative" equal-opportunity program, and that the number of blacks in the top grades of the civil service had gone up almost by half under the "low-key approach of the Nixon Administration." The number of black lawyers in the Justice Department had declined somewhat. There were said to have been 61 (out of a total of 1,900 to 2,000) under the Democrats. This figure had dropped under the Republicans to 45, but it also appeared that the difference was to be made up by new recruits. In the meantime the Department of Transportation was promulgating new rules, the Bureau of Prisons had eliminated the written test for correction officers, and similar activity aimed at increasing the number of blacks in the higher levels of the federal government was to be encountered elsewhere. All this, however, was going on in the context of a federal employment system whose patterns of practice were lamentably at odds with its profession of being an "equal-opportunity employer," to use the federal phrase. In the words of the *Times* story:

> The most recent figures show 137,919 blacks among the 1,289,114 Government employees covered by Civil Service regulations. That is about 10.7 per cent, less than the black proportion of the population, estimated in the 1970 census as 12.9 per cent.

The story went on to note that a number of black activists doubted that the federal government ever had been an equal-opportunity employer. One was particularly skeptical of executive orders: "This friendly persuasion thing has never worked in the history of our Government." Next came the question of quotas:

> Although little support for a formal quota system is evident, there is a widely held belief that Presidential statements of policy should be supplemented by more detailed instructions as to how the policies should be implemented.

There is little to take exception to in the foregoing. The official census figures for 1970 show blacks to be 12.4 per cent of the population, not 12.9 per cent, but newspapers routinely make such mistakes. It should also have been pointed out that blacks constitute only 10.9 per cent of

* It should not, of course, be supposed that people inside government "know" what happens. The *Rashomon* effect is universal. It is, moreover, not uncommon for men in government to be doing something quite different from what they think or intend. In such cases, the more accurate the press reporting, the more baffled or enraged the officials will be. Still, the judgment Raskin reports is near universal.

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the civilian non-institutional population of sixteen years of age or older, which is to say the population available for employment. In that sense, even accepting the figures used by the *Times*, blacks might be seen as having almost exactly "their" proportion of government employment, although an inadequate number of top positions.

The difficulty in this instance lies not with what was in the story, but what was not. What was not in the story was the fact that the category of federal worker—"General Schedule"—of which Negroes do indeed comprise 10.7 per cent is only one of three categories. In the other two categories of federal employee, the Postal Service and Wage System employees, Negroes made up 19.5 per cent and 19.7 per cent respectively. In rough terms, federal jobs are about equally divided among the three categories.* Small wonder, then, that the *Times* reported an absence of much discussion about establishing racial quotas for federal employment. Altogether, blacks have more than 15 per cent of federal jobs. If quotas were established according to the black proportion of the adult population, almost a third of black federal employees would have to be fired!

What all this comes to is that the very considerable achievement of blacks in qualifying for federal jobs and getting them far in excess of their proportion in the work force is in effect concealed and a legitimate source of black pride thereby denied. So too we are denied a legitimate sense of national progress in combating discrimination. And thus we are fed the tendentious allegations of those who wish to discredit the American "system" as inherently and irrevocably racist.

With respect to the role of the *Times* reporter, it must be said that it is simply not possible for him to have gotten the data on Classified Service employment from the Civil Service Commission releases on the subject without knowing that this is but one of three categories of employment, and that in the other categories blacks do exceptionally well. The truth would have made things look better than the reporter wished them to look. One fears it is as simple as that.

THE SECOND instance is rather more complicated. On September 14, 1970 a front-page story was published in the *Times* under the headline, "Negro College Heads Say Nixon Ignores Their Plight." The lead paragraph declared: "The presidents of nine financially troubled Negro colleges accused the Nixon Administration today of intensifying racial tensions by failing to support black education." The presidents felt that massive grants were needed and one was reported as saying that "It's five minutes before doomsday in this country." Dr. Vivian Henderson, president of Clark College in Atlanta, was reported as notably disturbed, asserting that "the Nixon Administration's utter lack of sensitivity on this point, purposeful or otherwise, is feeding the flames that already roar in the hearts of many black students."

All this seemed routine enough. From the onset of mass urban rioting in the mid-1960's all manner of requests for federal funds have been backed up by not especially subtle threats of violence. Nor was it unfamiliar to learn a few weeks later that the tactic had worked. On October 2, the front page of the *Times* carried a story from the Associated Press which began: "The Nixon Administration responded to complaints that it is insensitive to Negro education by announcing today a 30 per cent increase in Federal aid for predominantly black colleges." The next paragraph explained: "The Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare, Elliot L. Richardson, said in a statement the $30 million increase was ordered by President Nixon after he heard appeals from Negro educators."

The story bumped around in the press for the next few months, culminating in a way on January 3, 1971 when another *Times* story reported that the Negro colleges were not finding it possible to draw on all of the additional $30 million. Some college presidents were reportedly angry to have learned that the law provides for a 30-per-cent matching requirement for construction aid, which made up $20 million of the additional $30 million. But the basic theme of the *Times*'s coverage of this episode remained the same. The January 3 story began: "For two years, Negro colleges called on the Nixon Administration for substantial financial help. Last September, the Administration responded, releasing $30 million for use by the schools." There are problems of detail here. The Nixon administration had not been in office for two years in September 1969; the first *Times* report of an appeal appeared (as best I can determine) that very month, and the response came a month later, in October. Be that as it may, the January 3 story declared: "Black educators have severely criticized President Nixon for allegedly ignoring the plight of their schools. The educators charged that black schools have not shared in the money and grants that go out to American educational institutions."

To repeat, a familiar theme. The way to get something out of the federal government is to blast it out. Left to itself government would never have given these financially weak institu-

* These are, by the way, good jobs. In 1970, mean annual earnings of year-round full-time workers in the economy as a whole were $8,496. The average earnings of General Schedule federal employees in that year were $11,058; of Postal employees, $8,770; and of Wage System employees, $8,159. Washington, D.C. has a much higher per capita income than any state in the union for the reason that it has so many federal employees.

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tions a break. If you want action—especially if you are black—raise hell. Right?

Wrong.

At least wrong in this instance. The true sequence of events which made up this story was turned literally upside down by the *Times*. The initiative to aid black colleges had been voluntarily taken by the administration a year before the *Times* got on to the issue. The increased support was announced months before the *Times* reported it. Far from having denounced the administration, the black college presidents had been praising it. And, for good measure, far from getting less than their share of federal aid, the black colleges had all along been getting rather more.

THERE are 124 "predominantly black colleges" in America, most of them small, and most in the South. They enroll somewhat more than 2 per cent of the college population, but this includes more than half of all black undergraduates.* They live with many difficulties, of which the most important—as is true of almost all colleges, large and small—is money. In 1969, they organized themselves as the National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education and set out, as well they might, to get more federal funds. On October 23, 1969 a meeting on this subject was held in the Executive Office Building presided over by Robert J. Brown, a Special Assistant to the President, who as a Southern Negro was much interested in the problems of the predominantly black colleges. As a result of this meeting the Federal Interagency Committee on Education (FICE) was directed to find out what was already being done for these colleges by the considerable array of federal agencies involved in supporting education and what plans existed for the future. A preliminary report was sent to the White House in February 1970, and in June a 45-page document entitled "Federal Agencies and Black Colleges" was printed. It was a good report, full of information concerning what was being done and of recommendations for doing more. (One does not commission such reports with the expectation of being advised to do less.) In the meantime, on May 25, 1970, the President had met with a group of black college presidents, apparently the first such meeting ever to be held. In the aftermath of the Cambodian invasion Dr. James Cheek, president of Howard University, which is basically a federal institution, served temporarily in the White House as an associate of Chancellor Alexander Heard. During that time he made recommendations directly to the President on the subject of the black colleges. Much attention, then, was being given to this matter in the White House.

On July 23, 1970, a White House press conference was held by Brown and Robert Finch, formerly Secretary of HEW, now Counsellor to the President. The main purpose of the occasion was to release a statement by Heard on the completion of his advisory work on campus unrest. Obviously seeking to strike a positive note about the Heard-Cheek effort, the two White House men also brought up the subject of black colleges. The FICE report was given to the press, and Finch announced that on departing Dr. Cheek had filed a "separate document" on this "very unique" problem. He continued: "That just came in today. The President read it today. The President asked him to write such a report, and I am authorized to say, after discussing it with the President, that in HEW . . . we are going to increase [aid] . . . from $80 million to $100 million." Finch's numbers were somewhat garbled. HEW aid to black colleges at the time was $96 million for the fiscal year. The additional sum now being reallocated was between $29 million and $30 million. In any event, the *Times* report of the press conference did not mention this subject.

On July 31, Dr. Herman R. Branson, president of Central State University in Wilberforce, Ohio, and the new head of the National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education, wrote the President expressing appreciation for his move. On August 10 the President replied:

> The present financial plight of many of our small and the overwhelming majority of our black colleges clearly demonstrates to me that the Federal Government must strengthen its role in support of these institutions.
>
> I have committed this Administration to the vigorous support of equal educational opportunity. At the same time, we are encouraging excellence in all of our institutions of higher education.†

In a release dated August 11, 1970 the National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education formally responded to the administration's move. In the accepted and understood manner of interest groups, the Association expressed gratitude for what it had got, but assured the government that it was not, of course, enough. On the other hand, it was confident that more would be forthcoming:

> We do not view this excellent first step as adequate to all our needs but rather as a model of what all agencies can do. . . . With the forthright statement of the President in his

* In 1969 there were 171,339 students in black colleges, or 2.14 per cent of the national junior- and senior-college gross enrollment. Problems of definition complicate the statistics.

† The President was referring to his message to Congress on Higher Education of March 1970, which proposed a system of student aid by which the federal government would concentrate assistance on low-income students. A proposal to establish a National Foundation for Higher Education specifically referred to the problems of black colleges.

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letter to Dr. Branson, we are very much encouraged and heartened about the future.

The *Times* reported nothing of this statement, as it had reported nothing of the original announcement from the White House that an extra $30 million or so was being made available to black colleges. White House announcements, Presidential letters, Washington press conferences —all were ignored. The subject was not dealt with at all until the following month when, as noted earlier, a story depicted the black college presidents as denouncing the administration's "utter lack of sensitivity" on this matter. *This* story made the front page.

The day after it appeared Dr. Vivian Henderson, of Clark College in Atlanta, to whom the remark about "utter lack of sensitivity" had been attributed, sent the following unequivocal denial to the *Times*:

> I am deeply disturbed by the inaccurate reporting of the conference of Presidents of Negro Colleges that appeared in the September 14 issue of the New York *Times*. The following statement is attributed to me: "Instead the Nixon Administration's utter lack of sensitivity on this point, purposeful or otherwise, is feeding the flames that already roar in the hearts of many black students." This is a gross error and misrepresentation of what actually went on at the meeting. To be sure, we were concerned with the limited response of President Nixon to our problems. The fact is, however, that President Nixon has responded. He has not been silent with regard to concerns expressed by the Presidents in the meeting with him last May. Since the meeting with Mr. Nixon, about $27 million additional funds have been made available to black colleges. It would be unfair on our part not to recognize this response, limited though it is.
>
> I did not make the statement your reporter attributes to me. I do not recall such a statement being made during the course of the conference. . . .

The *Times* did not print this letter. Instead it went on to repeat the theme of the original story and gradually to establish it elsewhere as truth. In the end a small bit of history had been rewritten: even the wire services followed the *Times*'s version. *No one intended this.* That should be clear. It is simply that the journalistic system preferred a confrontation-capitulation model of events, and there was no internal corrective procedure to alert the editors to the mistakes being made.

There are true social costs in all this. For one thing, a paper like the *Times* is a prime medium for internal communication within the government itself. Any Washington official following this story in the *Times* would have had to assume that the administration's attitude toward black colleges was just about opposite to what in fact it was. Such a reversal of signals can have serious consequences. Similarly there are consequences to the principals involved, in this case the college presidents who had been acting with skill and discipline and reasonable success (most notably in having gained access: within hours of the appearance of the first *Times* story a black college president was in the White House seeking reassurance that the $27-30 million had not been jeopardized) but who found themselves represented as stereotypical confrontationists. Everyone in a sense lost because the *Times* got the story wrong.

VI

In the wake of so lengthy an analysis, what is there to prescribe? Little. Indeed, to prescribe much would be to miss the intent of the analysis. I have been hoping to make two points—the first explicitly, the second largely by implication. The first is that a convergence of journalistic tradition with evolving cultural patterns has placed the national government at a kind of operating disadvantage. It is hard for government to succeed: this theme echoes from every capital of the democratic world. In the United States it is hard for government to succeed and just as hard for government to appear to have succeeded when indeed it has done so. This situation can be said to have begun in the muckraking era with respect to urban government; it is now very much the case with respect to national government, as reflected in the "national press" which primarily includes the New York *Times*, the Washington *Post*, *Time*, *Newsweek*, and a number of other journals.

There is nothing the matter with investigative reporting; there ought to be more. The press can be maddeningly complacent about real social problems for which actual counter-measures, even solutions, exist. (I spent a decade, 1955-65, trying to obtain some press coverage of the problem of motor vehicle design, utterly without avail. The press, from the most prestigious journals on down, would print nothing but the pap handed out by the automobile companies and wholly-owned subsidaries such as the National Safety Council.) The issue is not one of serious inquiry, but of an almost feckless hostility to power.

The second point is that this may not be good for us. American government will only rarely and intermittently be run by persons drawn from the circles of those who own and edit and write for the national press; no government will ever have this circle as its political base. Hence the conditions are present for a protracted conflict in which the national government keeps losing. This might once have been a matter of little consequence or interest. It is, I believe, no longer such, for it now takes place within the context of what Nathan Glazer has so recently described in

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these pages* as an "assault on the reputation of America . . . which has already succeeded in reducing this country, in the eyes of many American intellectuals, to outlaw status. . . ." In other words, it is no longer a matter of this or that administration; it is becoming a matter of national morale, of a "loss of confidence and nerve," some of whose possible consequences, as Glazer indicates, are not pleasant to contemplate.

Some will argue that in the absence of a parliamentary question-time only the press can keep the Presidency honest. Here we get much talk about Presidential press conferences and such. This is a serious point, but I would argue that the analogy does not hold. Questions are put in Parliament primarily by members of an opposition party hoping to replace the one in office. Incompetent questions damage those chances; irresponsible questions damage the office. Indeed, British politicians have been known to compare the press lords to ladies of the street, seeking "power without responsibility." It would, of course, be better all around if Congress were more alert. Thus the *Times* has reported that the GNP estimate in the 1971 Budget Message was not that of the Council of Economic Advisors, but rather a higher figure dictated by the White House for political purposes. This is a profoundly serious charge. Someone has a lot to explain. It could be the administration; it could be the *Times*. Congress should find out.

Obviously the press of a free country is never going to be and never should be celebratory. Obviously government at all levels needs and will continue to get criticism and some of it will inevitably be harsh or destructive, often enough justifiably so. Obviously we will get more bad news than good. Indeed the content of the newspapers is far and away the best quick test of the political structure of a society. Take a morning plane from Delhi to Karachi. One leaves with a sheaf of poorly-printed Indian papers filled with bad news; one arrives to find a small number of nicely-printed Pakistani papers filled with good news. One has left a democracy, and has entered a country that is something less than a democracy.

Nonetheless there remains the question of balance. Does not an imbalance arise when the press becomes a too-willing outlet for mindless paranoia of the Joseph McCarthy or New Left variety? Does it not arise when the press becomes too self-satisfied to report its own mistakes with as much enterprise as it reports the mistakes of others?

Norman E. Isaacs, a working journalist, has written thoughtfully about the possibility of establishing a "national press council." This, in effect, was proposed by Robert M. Hutchins's Commission on Freedom of the Press in 1947: "A new and independent agency to appraise and report annually upon the performance of the press." There are press councils in other democratic countries which hear complaints, hand down verdicts, and even, as in Sweden, impose symbolic fines. There is a case to be made here, but I would argue that to set up such a council in this country at this time would be just the wrong thing to do. There is a statist quality about many of the press councils abroad: often as not they appear to have been set up to ward off direct government regulation. Freedom of the press is a constitutional guarantee in the United States: how that freedom is exercised should remain a matter for the professional standards of those who exercise it. Here, however, there really is room for improvement. First in the simple matter of competence. The very responsibility of the national press in seeking to deal with complex issues produces a kind of irresponsibility. The reporters aren't up to it. They get it wrong. It would be astonishing were it otherwise.

Further, there needs to be much more awareness of the quite narrow social and intellectual perspective within which the national press so often moves. There are no absolutes here; hardly any facts. But there *is* a condition that grows more not less pronounced. The national press is hardly a "value-free" institution. It very much reflects the judgment of owners and editors and reporters as to what is good and bad about the country and what can be done to make things better. It might be hoped that such persons would give more thought to just how much elitist criticism is good for a democracy. Is this a shocking idea? I think not. I would imagine that anyone who has read Peter Gay or Walter Laqueur on the history of the Weimar Republic would agree that there are dangers to democracy in an excess of elitist attack. A variant of the Jacksonian principle of democratic government is involved here. Whether or not ordinary men are capable of carrying out any governmental task whatsoever, ordinary men are going to be given such tasks. That is what it means to be a democracy. We had best not get our expectations too far out of line with what is likely to happen, and we had best not fall into the habit of measuring all performance by the often quite special tastes, preferences, and interests of a particular intellectual and social elite. (Perhaps most importantly, we must be supersensitive to the idea that if things are not working out well it is because this particular elite is not in charge. Consider the course of events that led to the war in Indochina.)

As to the press itself, one thing seems clear. It should become much more open about acknowledging mistakes. The *Times* should have printed Dr. Henderson's letter. Doubtless the bane of any editor is the howling of politicians and other public figures claiming to have been

* "The Role of the Intellectuals," February 1971.

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misquoted. But often they *are* misquoted. At the very least, should not more space be allotted to rebuttals and exchanges in which the issue at hand is how the press performed?

Another possibility is for each newspaper to keep a critical eye on itself. In the article previously cited which he did for the Sunday *Times Magazine*, A. H. Raskin called for "a Department of Internal Criticism" in every paper "to put all its standards under re-examination and to serve as a public protection in its day-to-day operations." The *Times* itself has yet to establish such a department but the Washington *Post* has recently set a welcome example here by inaugurating a regular editorial-page feature by Richard Harwood entitled "The News Business." Harwood's business is to check up on what his paper runs, and he is finding a good deal to check up on. (To all editors: *Please* understand there is nothing wrong with this. It is a routine experience of even the most advanced sciences. Perhaps especially of such.) Harwood has made a useful distinction between mistakes of detail—the ordinary garbles and slips of a fast-moving enterprise—and mistakes of judgment about the nature of events:

> The mistakes that are more difficult to fix are those that arise out of our selection and definition of the news. Often we are unaware of error until much time has passed and much damage has been done.
>
> In retrospect, it seems obvious that the destructive phenomenon called "McCarthyism" —the search in the 1950's for witches, scapegoats, traitors—was a product of this kind of error. Joseph McCarthy, an obscure and mediocre senator from Wisconsin, was transformed into the Grand Inquisitor by publicity. And there was no way later for the newspapers of America to repair that damage, to say on the morning after: "We regret the error."

Which will turn out "in retrospect" to seem the obvious errors of the 1960's? There were many, but they are past. The question now is what might be the errors of the 1970's, and whether some can be avoided. One Richard Harwood does not a professional upheaval make, but he marks a profoundly important beginning. All major journals should have such a man in a senior post, and very likely he should have a staff of reporters to help him cover "the news business."

As for government itself, there is not much to be done, but there is something. It is perfectly clear that the press will not be intimidated. Specific efforts like President Kennedy's to get David Halberstam removed as a *Times* correspondent in Vietnam almost always fail, as they deserve to do.* Non-specific charges such as those leveled by Vice President Agnew get nowhere either. They come down to an avowal of dislike, which is returned in more than ample measure, with the added charge that in criticizing the press the government may be trying to intimidate it, which is unconstitutional.

What government can do and should do is respond in specific terms to what it believes to be misstatements or mistaken emphases; it should address these responses to specific stories in specific papers and it should expect that these will be printed (with whatever retort the journal concerned wishes to make). Misrepresentations of government performance must never be allowed to go unchallenged. The notion of a "one-day story," and the consoling idea that yesterday's papers are used to wrap fish, are pernicious and wrong. Misinformation gets into the bloodstream and has consequences. The *Times* ought by now to have had a letter from the Chairman of the Civil Service Commission pointing out the mistakes in the November 15 story on minority employment, and the even more important omissions. If the first letter was ignored, he should have sent another. Similarly the *Times* ought long since have had a letter from an HEW official exposing the errors of its coverage of federal aid to black colleges. Failing that, someone should have called in the education writers of the *Times* and asked why they let other men misreport their beat. Etc. Hamilton's formulation has not been bettered: the measure of effective government is energy in the executive.

IN THE END, however, the issue is not one of politics but of culture. The culture of disparagement that has been so much in evidence of late, that has attained such an astonishing grip on the children of the rich and the mighty, and that has exerted an increasing influence on the tone of the national press in its dealings with the national government, is bad news for democracy. Some while ago the late Richard Hofstadter foresaw what has been happening:

> Perhaps we are really confronted with two cultures (not Snow's), whose spheres are increasingly independent and more likely to be conflicting than to be benignly convergent: a massive adversary culture on the one side, and the realm of socially responsible criticism on the other.

But given what has been happening to the press in recent years and what is likely to go on being the case if current trends should continue on their present path, where is such "socially responsible criticism" to come from? Or rather, where is it to appear in a manner that will inform and influence the course of public decision-making?

* See Halberstam's account of the incident in "Getting the Story in Vietnam," COMMENTARY, January 1965.

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"Worthy Editor. . ."

Selections from the Bintel Brief

The "Bintel Brief" ["A Bundle of Letters"] *has been in existence since 1906, when the editors of the* Jewish Daily Forward*—the largest and most influential Yiddish daily in America—first opened its pages to inquiries from its readers. Unlike the usual advice-to-the-lovelorn columns in journalistic vogue, the "Bintel Brief" was not limited in subject matter, but dispensed guidance on every aspect of the immigrant experience—from the proper use of the knife and fork to the proper relation between bosses and fledgling trade-unionists. Almost immediately the feature became a kind of nerve center and public bulletin board for the Lower East Side Jewish community, as well as an effective forum for that "Americanization" of its readership which the* Forward *saw as one of its primary tasks.*

The letters below, along with the original replies from the Forward*'s editors (in italics), span the years 1906-1938. All the selections have been taken from a larger sample of letters compiled and edited by Isaac Metzker which will be published by Doubleday in the spring under the title,* A Bintel Brief: Sixty Years of Letters from the Lower East Side to the Jewish Daily Forward.*

1906

Worthy Editor,

We are a small family, not long in the Golden Land. My husband, my boy, and I are together, and we have a daughter who lives in another city. . . .

My husband has become a peddler here. The "pleasure" of knocking on doors and ringing bells cannot be known by anyone but a peddler. If anybody does buy something "on time," a lot of the money is lost, because there are some people who never intend to pay. In addition, my husband has trouble because he has a beard, and because of the beard he gets beaten up by the hoodlums.

Also we have problems with our boy, who throws money around. He works every day till late at night in a grocery for three dollars a week. I watch over him and give him the best because I'm sorry that he has to work so hard, but he costs me plenty and he borrows money from everybody. . . . I want to point out that he is well versed in Russian and Hebrew and he is not a child anymore, but his behavior is not that of an intelligent adult.

I don't know what to do. My husband argues that he doesn't want to continue peddling. He doesn't want to shave off his beard, and it's not fitting for such a man to do so. The boy wants to go to his sister, but that's a twenty-five dollar fare. What can I do? I beg you for a suggestion.—Your Constant Reader, F. L.

Since this woman's husband doesn't earn a living anyway, it would be advisable for all three of them to move to the city where the daughter is living. As for the beard, we feel that if the man is religious and the beard is dear to him because the Jewish law does not allow him to shave it off, it's up to him to decide. But if he is not religious, and the beard interferes with his earnings, it should be sacrificed.

Dear Editor,

In the name of all the workers of our shop, I write these words to you: We work in a Bleecker Street shop, where we make raincoats. With us is a thirteen-year-old boy, who works hard for the two-and-a-half dollars a week he earns.

Just lately it happened that the boy came to work ten minutes late. This was a crime the bosses couldn't overlook, and for the lost ten minutes they docked him two cents. Isn't that a bitter joke?—Sincerely, V.

Dear Editor:

. . . I came to America as a *shochet*. The ship I was on sank. I was among the lucky ones who were rescued from the waves, but my valise with my possessions, including the license that authorized me as a *shochet*, was lost.

Since I could no longer be a *shochet*, I became a shirtmaker. Later I worked my way up, and became a cloakmaker. All was well, but I was not satisfied, as I don't have to tell you about conditions for the workers. The physical labor and the

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degradation we had to endure in the shops was unbearable.

Meanwhile, two of my brothers came from Europe. We stayed together and worked in a shirt shop. Several times we tried contracting, but it didn't work out. At that time, white collars for shirts came into fashion. We had to sew on neckbands, to which the white collars were buttoned. This became a nuisance that delayed the work. Imagine having to cut out a band to fit each shirt we made! . . .

In short, one of us got an idea. Since the whole trade found the neckbands a problem, why not make them ourselves for all the manufacturers? Said and done! It worked out well. They snatched the bands from our hands and we got very busy. We were the only ones in the line from the start, and we prospered. Later a few more shops opened, but that didn't bother us because the trade grew even bigger.

Now we have a huge factory with our names on a great sign. But the bands that gave us our start are not made by us brothers alone, and all this time we have paid little attention to our workers because we are so involved with our own fortune.

In time I began to read your newspaper, and out of curiosity, even the "Bintel Brief," to see what was going on in the world. As I read more and more about all the troubles my conscience awoke and I began to think: "Robber, cold-blooded robber, . . . just look at your workers, see how pale and thin and beaten your workers look, and see how healthy and ruddy your face and hands are.". . .

My conscience bothers me and I would like to correct my mistakes, so that I will not have to be ashamed of myself in the future. But do not forget that my brothers do not as yet feel as I do, and if I were to speak to them about all this, they would consider me crazy. So what is left for me to do? I beg you, Worthy Editor, give me a suggestion.—Yours sincerely, B.

We are proud and happy that through the Forward *and the "Bintel Brief" the conscience of this letter-writer was aroused. We can only say to the writer that he must not muffle the voice of his conscience. He will lose nothing, but will gain more and more true happiness.*

Dear Editor,

. . . Last year I met a young man, a few years older than I, a businessman with a good income. He soon fell in love with me. He began to bring me presents and begged me to say yes. . . .

Once he declared his love, my heart told me I would have trouble with him. I had no one here to advise me, and at one time I wanted to leave New York and so escape from him. But I stayed and did nothing. As time went on, he began to introduce me to his friends as his fianceé. Then he began to talk of renting an apartment. I want to state here that we are both free-thinkers, yet I didn't want to hear of just living together. But he won out, rented an apartment, furnished it, and ordered me to move my luggage and possessions there.

Dear Editor, it's possible I should be scolded for my actions, but believe me, I can't explain to myself why I obeyed him. Well, we're living together now for the eighth month and I feel as if I'm losing my mind. I can't stand his bass voice, it's as if a saw were rasping my bones. I hate him because he's a terrible egotist. When he starts talking about eating, or sits at the table with the cigar in his mouth, or pokes a toothpick around his teeth after eating, I feel so disgusted that I fear I am going out of my senses. . . .

I have no tears left from crying. I want to save myself but cannot. Often I choke from his talk, but when he is near me I lose control and become his slave. When he leaves I feel disgust and hatred. I want to escape from him because if I stay any longer I'll surely take my own life. Save me and advise me what to do.—Thankfully, Unhappy

The writer of this letter, we believe, could easily save herself. She could free herself if she really wanted to. By the "really wants to" we mean, if she had a strong enough character to accomplish it. From what she writes of her own feelings toward the man, and from the story she relates, the best move would be for her to free herself.

Worthy Editor,

I am a working man from Bialystok, and there I belonged to the "Bund." Later, I came to Minsk where I joined the Socialist-Revolutionaries. What convinced me to join was the following: In Minsk there had been a Bundist demonstration which was attacked by the police. They beat up the demonstrators brutally, and arrested many of them. The prisoners were lashed and many got sick. One worker from Dvinsk was sentenced to fifty lashes, which caused him to develop epilepsy. In the middle of his work he would suddenly fall down in a fit.

When we, his co-workers, saw this, it aroused in us a desire for revenge against Czar Nicholas and his tyrannical police force. But a convention of the "Bund" at that time declared a policy against revenge, so many of our former "Bund" members joined the Socialist-Revolutionaries. In the meantime, war was declared against Japan, and since I was a reservist, I began to get mail from home advising me to flee to America. I allowed myself to be talked into it and left.

I have been here for two years now, and life is not bad. I work in a jewelry store, for good wages. But my heart will not remain silent within me over the blood of the pogroms that took place in

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Bialystok, where I left old parents and a sister with three small children. I haven't heard from them since the pogrom and don't know if they're alive. But since they lived in the *Piaskes* where the Jewish defense group was located, it's possible they are alive.

Now I ask your advice. I cannot make up my mind whether to fulfill my duty to my parents and sister and bring them to America, if I hear from them, or to go back to Russia and help my brothers in their struggle. If I had known what was going to happen there, I would not have gone to America. I myself had urged that one should not leave for America but stay and fight in Russia till we would be victorious. Now I feel like a liar and a coward. I agitated my friends, placed them in danger of the soldiers' guns. And I myself ran away.—Respectfully, M.G.

If the writer had asked us the question before leaving Russia, we would not have advised him to leave the revolutionary battlefield. But since he is already here and speaks of his two duties, we would like to tell him that the Assistance Movement in America has attained such a position that anyone who wants to be useful will be able to do enough here. He should bring his parents and sister here, and become active in the local movement.

1907

Worthy Mr. Editor,

I am a workingman, and two years ago I entered into a partnership with another worker. We took in several other people, whom we paid well, and we all earned good wages.

During the two years we worked together, I was sick for three weeks, but my partner . . . gave me the usual half of the profits. I didn't want to take it, since I hadn't worked, but my partner, an honorable man, brought me the entire half.

Some time ago my partner got sick, and the first two weeks I, too, gave him half of what we earned. But when I wanted to give him his share after the third week, he didn't want to take it. He explained to me then that the partnership was dissolved because his doctor had told him to stop working.

My former partner is now in business, but he is not doing well. I, on the contrary, have worked a full season . . . and earned a good deal, because the extra profit remained for me alone.

Now my question is whether I have any obligations to my former partner, because since he became sick and left me, I am earning more than usual. I want to remark that I am a family man with young children, but I don't want to take what belongs to another. If you, Mr. Editor, will tell me I have a duty toward him, I will fulfill it. . . .—Respectfully, A Reader

It is comforting to see that there is still compassion in the world. According to the official rule of "mine" and "thine," the writer of the letter, after the partnership was dissolved, owes his partner nothing at all. But according to a rule of human kindness, he should give any and all help with an open hand to this faithful and honorable friend.

Worthy Mr. Editor,

Please decide who is right in a debate among friends, about whether a socialist should observe *Yahrzeit*.

One of the disputants is a socialist and free-thinker who observes his mother's *Yahrzeit* in the following manner: He pays a pious man to say the Kaddish prayer for the dead, and burns a *Yahrzeit* candle in his home. He himself doesn't say Kaddish because he doesn't believe in religion. But his desire to respect the memory of his mother is so strong that it does not prevent him from observing it even when it involves a religious ceremony.

Others among the debaters do not want to know of such an emotion as honoring the dead. But they argue that if one does desire to do so, one should say Kaddish himself, even if he does not believe in it.

Therefore, our first question is: Can we recognize the beautiful human emotion of honoring the dead, especially when it concerns one so near as a mother? The second question: If so, should the expression of honor be in keeping with the desires of the honored? Third: Would it be more conscientious and righteous if the free-thinker said Kaddish himself, or if he hired a pious man to do it for him? . . .—With regards, The Debating Group

Honoring a departed one who was cherished and loved is a gracious sentiment and a requisite for the living. And everyone wants to be remembered after his death. Socialists and free-thinkers observe the anniversaries of their great leaders—just recently they commemorated the twenty-fifth anniversary of the death of Karl Marx. Saying Kaddish is certainly a religious rite, and to pay someone to say Kaddish is not the act of a free-thinker. But we can understand the psychology of a free-thinker who feels that hiring someone else is not as much against his own convictions as saying Kaddish himself.

Worthy Editor,

. . . Max! The children and I now say farewell to you. You left us in such a terrible state. You had no compassion for us. For six years I loved you faithfully, took care of you like a loyal servant, never had a happy day with you. Yet I forgive you for everything.

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Have you ever figured out why you left us? Max, where is your conscience? You used to have sympathy for fallen women and used to say their terrible plight was due to the men who left them in dire need. And how did you act? I was a young, educated, decent girl when you took me. You lived with me for six years, during which I bore you four children. And then you left me. . . .

Be advised that in several days I am leaving with my two living orphans for Russia. We say farewell to you and beg you to take pity on us and send us enough to live on. My address in Russia will be. . . .—Your deserted wife and children

Esteemed Editor,

We were sitting in the shop when the boss came over to one of us and said, "You ruined the work: you'll have to pay for it." The worker answered that it wasn't his fault, that he had given out the work in perfect condition. The boss got mad and began to shout, "I pay your wages and you answer back, you dog! I should have thrown you out of my shop a long time ago!"

The worker trembled, his face got whiter. When the boss noticed how his face paled, he gestured and spat and walked away. The worker said no more. Tired, and overcome with shame, he turned back to his work and later he exclaimed, "For six years I've been working here like a slave, and he tells me, 'You dog, I'll throw you out!' I wanted to pick up an iron and smash his head in, but I saw before me my wife and five children who want to eat!"

Obviously, the offended man felt he had done wrong in not standing up for his honor as a worker and as a human being. In the shop, the machines hummed, the irons thumped, and we could see the tears running down his cheeks.

Did this unfortunate man act correctly in remaining silent under the insults of the boss? Is the fact that he has a wife and children the reason for his slavery and refusal to defend himself? . . . —Respectfully, A. P———ski

The worker cannot help himself alone. To defend their honor as men, the workers must be well organized. There is no limit to what must be done for a piece of bread. One must bite his lips till they bleed, and keep silent when he is alone. But he must not remain alone. He must not remain silent. He must unite with his fellow workers and fight.

Dear Mr. Editor,

. . . I am a barber, and have been practicing the "art" for ten years and become quite adept at it. Sounds good, yes? But then the following happened:

A few weeks ago, on a quiet afternoon when there were no customers and the boss was out somewhere, I dozed off while reading the *Police Gazette*. I soon dreamed that a customer entered. The boss and I took our positions near our chairs, and as usual the customer selected the one manned by the boss. As usual, I was a bit insulted as a craftsman, and a little vexed over being robbed of the tip. But it happened that the boss was called away in a hurry and he asked me to tend to the customer. I began to work on him and he laughed in my face. He grimaced, made strange faces, stuck out his tongue, and began to yell at me. Though I didn't understand the language, I felt he was calling me a clumsy barber. My patience finally gave out. And as I held the razor in my hand (don't question a dream!), I slit his throat. So naturally there was screaming and tumult and I awoke. From habit, I spat three times to banish the dream, but it didn't help.

Dear Editor, it must seem strange, or like a story created by a sick imagination, but what I write here is the truth: since my foolish dream, I cannot rest. I can't forget the dream. When I stand at my work and have to use my razor, I get a sudden impulse to do what I did in my dream. The greatest temptation I have to withstand is when my razor gets under the chin to the neck. Oh, then it's terrible! I am afraid I will go mad. I tried staying home from work for two days, but I can't get these thoughts out of my head.

I haven't told anyone about this yet, because I am ashamed. I beg you to advise me what to do. Shall I give up my job? I am willing to do anything to rid myself of my puzzling dilemma and my suffering. . . .—A Mad (?) Barber

Man's thoughts often weave automatically through "Idea-Patterns," as they are called in Psychological Science, and the muscles respond automatically to the ideas. Every man with a healthy will can shake off the unwanted ideas and the reflexes they call forth to the muscles.

Every man can dream he commits a terrible crime, because in dreams the controllable will is slumbering. The writer of this letter must simply laugh off the dream and drive the whole matter out of his head. But if his nervous system is for some reason weakened and therefore his control over his will power likewise weak, he must consult a doctor. But he, himself, must be strong and overcome his impulse.

Worthy Editor,

. . . I worked for the police department for a year and my job was to trail thieves and pickpockets and gather evidence against brothels. The state paid me seventy dollars a month, and my record for the year was very good. My boss, Officer Bingham, was very pleased with me, and took me in to work at headquarters. . . .

One day a complaint came that a certain

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restaurant was selling liquor without a license and I was sent to investigate. I came into the restaurant, sat down at a table and read the *Forward*. Soon a man came over to me, and I ordered a complete dinner. After the appetizer I asked for a schnapps and drank it. I finished the meal, and paid the sum of eighteen cents to the man. Then I looked around and saw the owner's seven children with their pale, emaciated mother, and I felt I could not be such a murderer as to take the father away from his children and send him to the city jail for a hundred and twenty days. . . . Well, I warned him to stop selling liquor, and showed him the complaint letter. He thanked me kindly and wanted to give me five dollars, but I wouldn't take it.

When I returned to the station I told the lieutenant who questioned me that there was no liquor or beer in the restaurant. But the lieutenant said he would send me back there with a man who had worked in the restaurant as a waiter and he would show me that there was liquor there. I returned to the restaurant with the former waiter, winked at the owner and asked for a schnapps. When he answered that he didn't sell whiskey, the waiter ran over to the counter, grabbed a bottle of whiskey and showed it to me. . . . When we got outside I told him he should be ashamed of himself for squealing on such a poor man. We had an argument and I slapped him around a little.

Later, when we got back to the police station, I was called into the captain's office, and he told me I was fired. I told him goodby and good luck and left. A few days later the captain called me back, but I told him I didn't want to do that kind of work any longer. . . . (I must add here that I am not a real police detective, because I don't wear a badge, and that's because I am not yet twenty-one years old.)

I don't want to go back, because I haven't the heart to do such a thing as allow a man to be punished for selling a glass of whiskey for three cents. I would rather starve than send such a man to prison. . . . Now I ask you to give me an idea how to act. I will do what you tell me. I have taken a dislike to the job, and if times weren't so bad now, I wouldn't even consider the idea of going back.—Respectfully, Former Assistant Detective

The young Assistant Detective is praised for his actions, for not wanting to inform on a poor man. He is advised to flee from the job as from a fire, because this work is not fit for such a fine young man, with such a kind heart. It is not right for him to place himself in servitude to the police, as they carry on these days, because of the danger that he might, in time, not be able to withstand the temptation and it would be hard for him to guard against sinking into the slime of immoral police practice.

1909

Worthy Editor,

I often spend time with a group that is made up of about forty people, thirty men and ten women. Among them are various people, religious and non-religious, and we do not pass the time in idle discussions.

Recently we read in a newspaper a report about the movement to give women the right to vote, and for the past few weeks we have been carrying on a debate about it. I am one of the group that is in favor of giving women full rights, and most of the others are against it. The opposed argue that it would be very bad to let the women get to the ballot box, because that would destroy their family life. The woman would then no longer be a housewife, the mother to her children, the wife to her husband—in a word, everything would suddenly be destroyed.

A woman must not mix in politics, they say. She was created to be dependent on the man, obey him, love him, supply him with comforts, and be a mother to his children. The question arises: Must the woman then be considered a slave, and the man the master? Isn't it obvious that women in many cases show themselves to be cleverer than men? These same people who recently celebrated the 100th birthday of Abraham Lincoln, for having freed the Negro slaves, now talk with a satirical grin about women's freedom. . . .—With socialistic regards, L. V.

The arguments against the opponents of women's rights are very good ones. The fact is that many intelligent women are already taking part in various activities and they still remain excellent homemakers.

Justice can reign among all kinds of people only when they all have equal rights. If one has more power than the others, it leads to injustice. Those men who are opposed to giving women the same full rights they possess are acting from tyrannical instincts because they actually want to be rulers over the women.

Dear Mr. Editor,

I was born in a small town in Russia, and until I was sixteen I studied in Talmud Torahs and yeshivas, but when I came to America I changed quickly. Influenced by the progressive newspapers and the literature. I developed spiritually and became a free-thinker. I meet with free-thinking, forward-moving people, I feel comfortable in their company, and I agree with their convictions.

But the nature of my feelings is remarkable. Listen to me: Every year when the month of Elul rolls around, when the time of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur approaches, my heart

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grows heavier and sadder. A melancholy descends on me, a gnawing longing cries out in my breast. At that time I cannot rest, I wander about through the streets, lost in thought, depressed.

When I go past a synagogue during these days and hear a cantor chanting the melodies of the prayers, I become very gloomy and my suffering is so sharp that I cannot endure it. My memory goes back to happy childhood years. I see clearly and brightly before me the little town, the fields, the little pond, and the woods around it. I recall my childhood friends with our sweet childlike faith, my heart constricts, and I begin to run like a madman till the tears stream from my eyes and then I become calmer.

These emotions, or these moods, became stronger and stronger in me, till I decided to go to the synagogue—but not in order to pray to God.

I went to heal and refresh my aching soul with the cantor's sweet melodies, and this had an unusually good effect on me. Sitting in the synagogue among *landsleit* and listening to the good cantor, I forgot my unhappy weekday life, the dirty shop, my boss, the bloodsucker, and my pale, sick wife and the children. All of my America with its hurry-up life was forgotten.

I am a member of a Progressive Society, and since I am known there as an outspoken free-thinker, they began to criticize me for going to the synagogue. The members do not want to hear of my personal emotions and they won't understand that there are people whose natures are such that memories of their childhood are sometimes stronger than their convictions.

And where can one hide on Yom Kippur? There are many of us like me. They don't go to work, so it would be good if there could be a meeting-hall where they could gather to hear a concert, a lecture, or something else. . . .—Your reader, S. R.

No one can tell another what to do with himself on Yom Kippur. If one is drawn to the synagogue that is his choice. Naturally, a genuinely sincere free-thinker is not drawn to the synagogue. The writer of this letter is full of memories of his childhood days at home, and therefore the cantor's melodies influence him so strongly. Who among us isn't moved by a religious melody remembered from his youth? This, however, has no bearing on loyalty to one's convictions. On Yom Kippur, a free-thinker can spend his time in a library or with friends. On this day one should not flaunt himself in the faces of the religious. There is no sense in arousing the feelings of the fanatics. Every man has a right to live according to his understanding. The pious man has as much right to his religion as the free-thinker to his atheism. To parade one's acts and insults against religion in the faces of the pious, especially on the day they hold most holy, is simply inhuman.

1910

Dear Editor,

Just as there is agitation all around us about the cloakmakers' strike, so there is also a tumult about it in our Society of *landsleit*. A committee from the cloakmakers was sent to one of our meetings to ask for support for the strike, but our treasury was closed for six months by resolution of the members, and no expenditures may be voted. Knowing that time is valuable to the cloakmakers, we began a debate about it after we sent the committee away. As president of the Society, I had to speak in the interests of the group, even though I am a friend of the workers.

A motion was made to tax the brothers at the next meeting to raise money for the strikers. But the motion was defeated by the members with the argument that each one could, of his own free will, make his own contribution for the strike. We did not come to any conclusion, and the meeting was adjourned. Knowing the condition of the strikers, I decided not to wait for a second meeting and I brought to the *Forward* office five dollars for the striking cloakmakers in the name of our organization. . . .

I know that when I bring it up at the next meeting there will be some who oppose this and will say I had no right to do it, so I appeal to you for an opinion. I would like to hear from you whether I had the right to act on my own and give aid to the strikers.—A Constant Reader

We would certainly want a great deal of money to come in for the strikers. But what's true is true: A president does not have the right to give contributions and make disbursements without the agreement of the membership.

Dear Editor,

. . . Does a married woman have the right to give up two evenings a week to educate herself? My husband thinks I have no right to do this.

I admit that I cannot be satisfied to be just a wife and mother. I am still young and I want to enjoy life. My children and my house are not neglected, but I go twice a week to evening high school. My husband is not pleased, and when I come home at night and ring the doorbell, he intentionally lets me stand outside a long time, and doesn't hurry to open the door.

Now he has announced a new decision. Because I send out the laundry to be done, it seems to him that I have too much time for myself, even enough to go to school. So from now on, he will count out every penny for anything I have to buy for the house, so I will not be able to send out the laundry any more. . . .

When I am alone with my thoughts, I feel I may not be right. Perhaps I should not go to school. I want to remark here that my husband

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is an intelligent man and he did not want to marry a woman who was uneducated. The fact that he is intelligent makes me more annoyed with him. He is in favor of the emancipation of women, yet in real life he acts contrary to his beliefs. . . .—Your reader, The Discontented Wife

Since this man is intelligent and an adherent of the women's emancipation movement, he is scolded severely in the answer for wanting to keep his wife so enslaved. Also the opinion is expressed that the wife absolutely has the right to go to school two evenings a week.

Dear Editor,

. . . I was born in Russia and was twelve years old when I came to America with my dear mother. My sister, who was in the country before us, brought us over. My sister supported us; she didn't allow me to go to work, but sent me to school. I went to school for two years and didn't miss a day, but then came the terrible fire at the Triangle shop, where she worked, and I lost my dear sister. My mother and I suffer terribly from the misfortune. I had to help my mother and after school hours I go out and sell newspapers.

I have to go to school three more years, and after that I want to go to college. But my mother doesn't want me to go to school because she thinks I should go to work. She feels I am too old to learn. I tell her I will work days and study at night but she won't hear of it.

Since I read the *Forward* to my mother every night, including your answers in the "Bintel Brief," I beg you to answer me and say a few words to her—Your Reader, The Newsboy

The answer to this letter is directed to the boy's mother, whose daughter was one of the shop-workers who perished in the Triangle Fire. The unfortunate woman is comforted in the answer, and she is told that she must not hinder her son's nighttime studies, but must help him reach his goal. And an appeal is made to good people to help the boy with his education.

1913

Worthy Mr. Editor,

. . . My husband's parents were killed in a pogrom and he alone barely escaped with his life. Later he was forced to leave Russia and he came to America.

Since the world-famed case of Mendel Beilis began in Russia, my husband doesn't miss reading anything that is written about it. And every time he finishes reading something in the newspaper about the bloodthirsty trial he gets so upset, so nervous, that he sometimes shows signs of madness. More than once, I've been afraid to stay alone in the house with him.

At first it was bearable, but lately the news about the trial affected his nerves so much that he took it into his head that he must go back to Russia to take revenge on Beilis's persecutors. He had already packed his bags, but when he began to take leave of the children, they began to cry so bitterly that he remained at home. . . . A few days ago he went to a lawyer and signed over to me and the children the few hundred dollars he has in the bank. He told me he did this so that in case something happened to him in Russia the children and I would at least have a few dollars.

Therefore, dear Editor, I need your advice. Maybe your answer will calm him a little, and he will put these ideas out of his head—Mary

Thousands of Jews come to America with their pogrom-wounds that still bleed and can never be completely healed. And is it any wonder that this writer's husband has shattered nerves? The murderers there killed his parents, almost brought about his death, and now the dreadful Beilis trial has reopened his old wounds.

Russia is full of such people, Jews and non-Jews, who feel the same hatred as he for the Black Hundreds, and if it were possible to take revenge on the guilty ones they wouldn't wait for him to come all the way from America. But time will pay them what's due them. This man must calm himself, he must have pity on his wife and children and stop thinking of leaving them. The most important point is, however, that the wife must take him to a good psychiatrist.

Dear Editor,

I come from Russia, where I was brought up by a father who was a Talmud-scholar and a cantor. I took after my father both in learning and voice, and when I became a Bar Mitzvah my leading the congregation in prayer made a sensation. My name became known in many cities and people came to hear me conduct the services.

When I turned eighteen, a respected man from a town near Kovno took me as son-in-law, gave me four-hundred rubles and five years of room and board as dowry and with all this, a pretty daughter of sixteen. I moved into my father-in-law's house, ate, drank, and devoted myself to the study of Torah. Once in a while, on a special Sabbath or a holiday, I led the prayers in *shul,* but I took no money for that. . . .

I began to talk to my wife about going to America, and after long deliberation, we left home. When we came to this country, our *landsleit* helped us a little to get settled and when the High Holy Days came, I earned a hundred and eighty dollars as a cantor leading the *Musaph* prayers. I began to make a living as a cantor, and people began to hire me for weddings, funerals, and other affairs.

As time went on my horizons broadened. I

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read all kinds of books, I accumulated worldly knowledge, and began to look at life differently.

In short, I can't reconcile myself to continue making a living as a cantor, because I am no longer a believer. I can't act against my conscience, and the right thing to do is to give up my present religious livelihood. I simply want to learn a trade now, perhaps become a peddler or find another means of earning a living that would have no connection with religion. . . .

Now there are arguments over this among me, my wife, and our close friends, and we all decided to place the question in your hands. . . . —Your reader, The Progressive Cantor

This question would be answered by free-thinkers as well as religious people in the same way. Even the rabbi would say that according to Jewish law only a pious Jew may be a cantor. His wife and his religious friends who are trying to convince him to remain a cantor are really committing the worst sin according to their beliefs.

For a non-believer to be a cantor for an Orthodox congregation is without a doubt a shameless hypocrisy.

Worthy Mr. Editor,

. . . I was born in Russia of poor parents and when quite young I went to Vilna to study at the Romailes Yeshiva. Later I studied at a yeshiva in Kovno. I "ate days" at other people's tables and often went hungry because there were many times when I had only three "days" a week.

When I was eighteen I came home to my parents. Because I had been listed through an error as a few years older, I was due to be drafted for military service so it was decided that I go to America. I had a hard time until I finally saw the Golden Land, and here during the first years I suffered a great deal. . . .

In time I married a girl who was as lonely as I, and we were happy, even though I made a meager living. When our big-mouth "Workers' Liberator," Teddy Roosevelt, was elected for his second term, it got so bad that I couldn't find a job. We had five children by then and no money coming in. At that time I became a janitor, and for the work I was given two dark little rooms (on Stanton Street) where the sun was ashamed to shine.

Once, when I went out to look for work, I unexpectedly met a friend with whom I had studied years ago in Vilna. I was thin as a rail, but he had a strong neck, a fat belly, and was well dressed. I asked him what his occupation was, but he didn't answer right away. Instead, he invited me to his home and there told me that if I wanted to, I could be as well off as he. In short, he told me he was a Christian missionary and got one hundred seventy-five dollars a month, not counting gifts. I was in a tight spot and I let him talk me into it. . . .

When my wife, who was religious, found out that I had become a missionary, she didn't want to know me any longer. I was sent to do my work elsewhere and I got no news from my wife and children. . . .

I cannot demand sympathy from my wife, because I do not deserve it, but I hope you will print my letter. Maybe my wife will read it and perhaps at least let me know where she is and how my living orphans are, because I would like to help them out. I also hope that my letter will serve as a warning to others to beware of making the terrible mistake I made.—With Respect, Unhappy, S. D. G.

This is the reward for treachery, for preaching something one does not himself believe in. If the writer of this letter is now sincere and has really repented, his wife should forgive him and come back to him with the children. She must remember that even God Himself receives a penitent with open arms.

1917

Dear Editor,

Because of activity in the revolutionary movement in Russia, I was forced to leave the country four years ago and come to America. I had no trade, because I was brought up in a wealthy home, so I struggled terribly at first. Thanks to my education and my ability to adjust, I am now a manager of a large wholesale firm and earn good wages. In time I fell in love with an American girl, intelligent and pretty, and married her.

America was my new home, and my wife and I tried to live in a way that would be most interesting and pleasant. From time to time, however, I had the desire to visit Russia to see what was going on there. But in America one is always busy and there is no time to be sentimental, so I never went.

But now everything is changed. The Russian Freedom Movement, in which I took a great part, has conquered Tsarism; the ideal for which I fought has become a reality, and my heart draws me there more than ever now. I began to talk about it to my wife, but she answers that she hasn't the least desire to go to Russia. My revolutionary fire has cooled down here in practical America, but it is not altogether extinguished, and I'm ready to go home now.

The last events in Russia do not let me rest, and my mind is not on my job. But my wife and her parents tell me it would be foolish to leave such a good job and ruin everything. My wife doesn't want to go, and she holds me back. I can't leave my wife, whom I love very much, but it's hard to turn my back on my beloved homeland. I don't know how to act, and I beg you to advise me what to do. . . .—Respectfully, A.

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Many of those who took part in the freedom-struggle are drawn to take a look at liberated Russia. But not everyone can manage it. This is also the position of the writer, who has obligations to his wife. She is an American, she has her family here, so how can she leave her home and go to a strange country? Besides, while the terrible battles are still raging, there can be no discussion about visiting Russia.

1920

Dear Editor,

I want to hear your opinion about the behavior of a woman I am acquainted with, who belongs to progressive groups and considers herself a radical.

Not long ago I was invited to their home by the woman and her husband, and I spent a pleasant evening with them. When the time came to eat supper, everyone went into the dining room to sit down at the table, and the poor woman who works for them ate in the kitchen.

Since I know the couple and I know they consider themselves radical people, I wondered why the servant didn't eat at the table along with everyone. I took the liberty of telling the woman of the house that she ought to call the maid in to eat with everyone in the dining room because it wasn't right for her to sit alone in the kitchen. Then my friend answered me that it has to be this way, that the woman who works for them must eat separately.

For me, this was not the right answer from such a woman, and it seems that one of us does not understand the ethics and morals of the socialist viewpoint. Therefore I ask you to explain to us which one is right.—With socialistic regards, A Reader

We are in agreement with the writer, and not with his friend. Progressive people should not discriminate between the servant and the members of the family. When everyone eats in the dining room and the maid is left sitting in the kitchen, they are wronging her because this is really degrading.

1928

Dear Editor,

I consider myself a progressive woman who thinks there should be no difference between Jews and Christians. Years ago when I was a girl and sometimes heard that parents would not allow their daughter to marry a Christian, I maintained that they should not interfere. I believed that a fine Christian was as good as a fine Jew.

Now, however, when my daughter has fallen in love with a Gentile, I have become one of the mothers who interferes so that the match should not succeed. I am not one of those fanatic parents who warn their children that they will disown them because of such a match, but I'm trying with goodness to influence my daughter to break up with the boy.

My daughter argues with me. . . . She is educated, she knows how to talk to me, and often I have no answers to her arguments. But I feel this is no match for my daughter. Her friend comes here often, and as a person he appeals to me, but not as a husband for her.

I don't know how to explain it; he is quiet and gentlemanly in his ways, but he talks differently from a Jew and is different in nature too. He is an intelligent person, his parents are ordinary American Yankees, they speak of President Coolidge as of a holy man, never miss a Sunday at church, and when I think that they might become my *machutonim* and their son my daughter's husband, I just tremble. I feel (a mother's heart feels) that my daughter could never get used to these people.

When one is young and in love, one is in the clouds and sees no flaws. But when the love cools down, she will see it's no good. . . .

I would very much like to hear your opinion on this question.—Respectfully, A Mother

You, yourself, answered everything in your letter, and our opinion is the same as yours. Your daughter might also understand that according to logic the match with the Gentile is not a good one, but her infatuation draws her to the young man. And when love begins to speak, then all the sensible arguments are worthless.

1930

Worthy Editor,

. . . My sister, who was widowed in her twenties, had a good education in Europe; in America she graduated from high school and had two years of college. We in the family are proud of her, because she is smart, well-educated, and has a fine character. But it hurts us to see her wasting her best years alone. We would very much like to have her remarry. Since she is involved in business and seldom goes out, I expressed an opinion that she ought to go to a *Shadchan* who could easily arrange a match for her.

My sister answered that anyone with self-respect wouldn't go to a *Shadchan,* because that seemed to her like going on the slave market. Marriage means to her the union of two people bound by deep friendship.

Then a discussion developed on whether an intelligent, progressive person should go to a matchmaker. Some expressed the opinion that when a person cannot find a match for himself, there's nothing wrong if he marries through a

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shadchan, since this is no obstacle to happiness. Others agreed with my sister. They argued that going to a *shadchan* was only for ignorant people in some remote village in Europe. A modern intelligent person should not go to be weighed and measured like a cow at the fair.

So we decided to leave it up to you, Worthy Editor. May educated, progressive people go to a *shadchan*? . . .—A Reader in the name of a Group

It depends how a person feels about this, because consulting a shadchan *has nothing to do with education or enlightenment. One person considers it like a fair where cattle are sold, and in some cases it does resemble a fair. Another person has an altogether different opinion because a* shadchan *does not match up brides and grooms nowadays sight unseen. He just introduces people so that they can get acquainted. If they like each other they can fall in love later. Couldn't the parks, Coney Island beaches, or a dance hall where people meet, also be considered matchmakers?*

1933

Worthy Editor,

. . . My parents, who are readers of your paper for years, came from Russia. They have been in this country for over thirty years now, and were married here twenty-eight years ago. They have five sons, and I am one of them. The oldest of us is twenty-seven and the youngest twenty-one. We are all making a decent living. One of us works for the State Department, a second is a manager in a large store, two are in business, and the youngest is studying law. Our parents do not need our help, because my father has a good job.

We, the five brothers, are Americans and always speak English to each other. Our parents know English too, but they speak only Yiddish, not just among themselves but to us too, and even to our American friends who come to visit us. We beg them not to speak Yiddish in the presence of our friends, since they can speak English, but they don't want to. It's sort of stubbornness on their part, and a great deal of quarreling goes on between our parents and ourselves because of it. Their answer is: "Children, we ask you not to try to teach us how to talk to people. We are older than you."

Imagine, even when we go with father to a store on Fifth Avenue in New York to buy something, he insists on speaking Yiddish. We are not ashamed of our parents, God forbid, but they ought to know where it's proper and where it's not. Well, if they talk Yiddish among themselves at home, or to us, it's bad enough, but among strangers and Christians? . . . They want to keep only to their old ways and don't want to take up our new ways.—Respectfully, I. and the Four Brothers

We see absolutely no crime in the parents' speaking Yiddish to their sons. The Yiddish language is dear to them and they want to speak in that language to their children and to all who understand it. It may also be that they are ashamed to speak their imperfect English among strangers so they prefer to use their mother tongue.

From the letter, we get the impression that the parents are not fanatics, and with their speaking in the mother tongue they are not out to spite the children. But it would certainly not be wrong if the parents were also to speak English to the children. People should and must learn the language of their country.

1938

Dear Editor,

. . . I am a man in my fifties, and I came to America when I was very young. I don't have to tell you how hard life was for a greenhorn in those times. But I harnessed myself to the wagon of family life and pulled with all my strength.

My wife was faithful and she gave me a hand in pulling the wagon. The years flew fast and before we looked around we were parents of four children who brightened and sweetened our lives. The children were dear and smart and we gave them an education that was more than we could afford. They went to college, became professionals, and are well settled.

And suddenly I feel as if the ground has collapsed under my feet. I don't know how to express it, but the fact that my children are well educated and have outgrown me makes me feel bad. I can't talk to them about my problems and they can't talk to me about theirs. It's as if there were a deep abyss between us that divides us.

People envy me my good, fine, educated children, but (I am ashamed to admit it) I often think it might be better for me if they were not so well-educated, but ordinary workingmen, like me. Then we would have more in common. I have no education, because my parents were poor, and in the old country they couldn't give me the opportunities that I could give my children. Here, in America, I didn't have time and my mind wasn't on learning in the early years when I had to work hard.

That is my problem. I want to hear your opinion about it. I enclose my full name and address, but please do not print it. I will sign instead as —Disappointed. . . .

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Sexism in the Head

Arlene Croce

THERE is a point in life when every woman is a feminist. Generally it's in the college years when ideas have more glamor and excitement than they ever will have again, or in the first years out on a job, which teach the truth of feminist books and pamphlets. The men during those years are still there to be argued with; they haven't been drained off by marriage. And since feminism is the only idea a woman can really grasp in her nature, can *feel* without having to know very much about the history or literature of the movement, discussing the position of women with men is a good preliminary to (or substitute for) sleeping with them, a disguised way of discussing oneself. It makes life personal again at a time when the personality feels the first thrust of the world's indifference.

And it does so again later, after a divorce or two or a number of years without satisfaction in marriage or advancement in a career, but the men are now in short supply, and a woman who feels a sense of connection with feminist philosophy in her late twenties or early thirties is apt to feel isolated by it. The position has lost its sexiness; its capacity to illuminate life in personal terms has become a negative one. To a healthy woman it becomes a burden—she can move faster and farther without it; but to the less fortunate—those who can't expel the poisons of self-pity or sexual jealousy or utopian greed—feminism is a solipsistic haven, a place in the psyche where all the bad and bitter feelings unite, where unbearably personal failures are rationalized by a belief in organic failures in society. Feminism, because it is fundamentally self-expression with nothing outside the self to express, can be outgrown even when there remain feminist issues to be cleared up. At twenty it's useful and fulfilling to be a feminist; at thirty (and over) it's indulgent and wasteful and, at the present moment in history, not a little crazy.

The short but active history of the present feminist revival is pretty well documented in the library of books by and about women now pouring from the presses. The reason there are so many books is not that women never know when enough's enough; it's that their (mostly male) publishers don't. And the (mostly male) reviewers, who might have told them, have been astonishingly receptive. These men are perhaps feeling a little guilty and a little flattered at the same time by all the imprecations against "patriarchal society." Nobody has called them patriarchs in some time—they didn't know their own strength. But what the women who write the books know is that Women's Liberation, so-called, is the only movement that has to struggle full time to persuade its constituents of their need to be liberated. The books are written not only by and about but *to* women. No intelligent man can be expected to keep his head in these gaseous effluvia compounded of reason and unreason, solid premise and hysterical deduction, legitimate gripe and invincible myth. The outstanding failure of Women's Liberation is that it has enlisted no outstanding men. It has no Havelock Ellises or John Stuart Mills. That may be because it is not a liberation movement at all but an attempt to mobilize vengeance, and the more explicitly anti-male it becomes, the more corrupt becomes its core protest. On one level it's a losing fight. Measures which might have had efficacy when applied to proximate irritations, like job discrimination, lose all their force. But on another level it's no contest at all. This blundering chauvinism encounters no resistance—nothing *formidable*. It crushes the living animus out of every decent relationship that men and women have been able to contrive. If a woman can't say "I hate men" (and I don't know an honest woman who hasn't said it sometimes) without feeling like part of a slaves' rebellion, then she *is* a slave, in thrall to a worse orthodoxy than the one her "sisters" want to liberate her from.

Men in a position to do something about sexual discrimination are paradoxically relieved of their obligations by a campaign so absurdly far-flung. If nothing less than a "revolution in consciousness," sweeping away that most repressive of male inventions, the family, will suffice to end the miseries of women, then what's one employer, one Congressman, one welfare supervisor, union official, civil-liberties lawyer to do in the meantime? He may presumably raise his consciousness by

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reading Women's Lib books and articles, in which every knock is a caress. If man really invented the family, then every rabbitty commuter scurrying for the 8:05 that will take him to a detestable job can relax a little in Steig-like dreams of glory. "Man is the oppressor!" What ego-satisfactions in the clank of that rusty old cow-bell. Or, alternatively: "Man is not the oppressor! Woman's liberation is also the liberation of man" (provided man is homosexual, an extra-marital cheat, a begetter of illegitimate children, a patron of prostitutes, or involved in other sexually nefarious ways with women he doesn't respect).

The radicals of Women's Lib have all but preempted the field of argument with their titillating visions of patriarchal dominance, brutality, and male conspiracy. And because they don't believe in individual responsibility—they are, almost to a woman, suprasocialists with a fixed view of sex as the basis of class struggle (Kate Millett, in *Sexual Politics*,* adapting Engels: "Thus all the mechanisms of human inequality arose out of the foundations of male supremacy and the subjection of women, sexual politics serving historically as the foundation of all other social, political, and economic structures")—they don't believe in individual solutions either, only communal ones. Even Betty Friedan, who in the present state of things might be thought of as a moderate, rejects the idea that women can assert themselves as individual human beings *now* without waiting for ideological aid and counsel from Betty Friedan. In *Voices of the New Feminism*† she speaks of such women as "token spokeswomen" and "Aunt Toms," and writes, "We are beginning to know that no woman can achieve a real breakthrough alone, as long as sex discrimination exists in employment, under the law, in education, in mores, and in denigration of the image of women." As long (in short) as society remains imperfect. Yet in spite of all these horrors a great many women, in middle-class white America especially, have gone along for years achieving all kinds of "real" breakthroughs (you can only make a false breakthrough in something that doesn't resist). Mrs. Friedan is thought by some people to have made one herself.

Because they don't recognize a biological base for the distinctions commonly made between men's and women's social roles, many advocates of Women's Lib look on the classic institutions of our society as a series of tricks played on women by men. They see Western civilization, which sponsored and thrived on the patriarchal nuclear family, as an artificial construct enabling men to gain and keep power at the expense of women, and they really think they can turn the whole thing around by abolishing the family with its invidious power equation (Patriarchy equals Paternity plus Property), setting up communes, relegating child care to "professionals" (whether men or women), and reprogramming the attitudes of male and female children toward sex. They think all this is not only desirable but possible and who knows, they may be right. We live in strange times. Only eighteen months ago these notions were the hallucinations of a lunatic fringe. Now they are the common trash of daily conversation, part of the polluted air we breathe. In New York, where educated people profess boredom with feminist revolt, it is easier to get an abortion than equal pay for equal work.

The radicalization of mass consciousness now under way is introducing—I am trying to put it into words the sisterhood will understand—a mass opiate, and here is a slogan for it: Revolution is reaction to reform. One of the difficulties of dealing with revolutionary feminism is that it is intellectually inane—little more than a feeling of persecution dressed up as a *Weltanschauung*. These massive revolutionary formulas that are supposed to stun the opposition and only give it a high instead—of what do they consist? The stereotypes of 1930's Marxism plus a little Wilhelm Reich plus a lot—rather too much—of Masters and Johnson, who are the unofficial mentors of Women's Lib as Marcuse was of the student Left and Fanon of the black liberation movements. The capitalist-militarist-imperialist-racist society has now become male chauvinist as well. As a set of ideas Women's Lib is about as creative and inspiring as a set of Tinker Toys, and women who like to busy themselves with mechanical playthings may properly be said, I think, to be regressing. In their books they even sound mechanical—toneless, like children repeating their lessons about the great revolution to come. In Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*, which raised the consciousness of the 50's, all feminist roads led to socialism, but de Beauvoir's position was an expression of her total personality as a writer. Some of these neo-feminist tracts seem to have been written by computers. In *The Dialectic of Sex*,** a self-declared disciple of de Beauvoir, Shulamith Firestone, concocts a futuristic vision of "cybernetic socialism" from which I excerpt one facet, that dealing with love and sexual freedom as they affect the child (we must assume the family to have withered away):

> . . . If a child does not know his own mother, or at least does not attach a special value to her over others, it is unlikely that he would choose her as his first love object, only to have to develop inhibitions on this love. It is possible that the child might form his first close physical relationship with people his own size out of sheer physical convenience, just as men and women, all else being equal, might prefer each other over those of the same sex for sheer physical fit.

* Doubleday, 393 pp., $7.95.

† Edited by Mary Lou Thompson, Beacon Press, 246 pp., $5.95.

** Morrow, 274 pp., $6.95.

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But even if he should happen to pick his own genetic mother, there would be no *a priori* reasons for her to reject his sexual advances, because the incest taboo would have lost its function. The "household," a transient social form, would not be subject to the dangers of inbreeding.

Talk about regression! This is not socialism, "cybernetic" or otherwise. This is the forest primeval. These primitive paradises where no inhibitions whatever are practiced resemble no primitive society that ever existed (for long). They also have a way of resembling those infantile utopias of escapist fiction where sex is never mentioned and nobody misses it. In the Tinker Toy paradise everything is missing *except* sex. (Note how the sexes come together—not for passion but for "sheer physical fit.") Everything that limits the release of the libido is purged. Thus the family. Thus the incest taboo. Miss Firestone is telling us that mothers should have genital sex with their sons lest they grow up repressed or homosexual (though why that should matter, when polymorphously perverse sexuality is the norm for all, isn't clear). Furthermore, she is telling us that they should have genital *intercourse* (although how coitus between an adult woman and a male child comes to be mutually desirable or even thinkable isn't clear either). To revoke the incest taboo, which applies legally only in cases where penetration has taken place, is to revoke the family, is to revoke the whole concept of motherhood except in the genetic sense. Even here, too, there are some severe qualifications, for in Miss Firestone's paradise young Oedipus is more than likely to be a test-tube baby.

Here is where Women's Lib goes off the cliff. The incest taboo (and Miss Firestone surely knows it) is based not on biological fears of inbreeding but on an almost universal compulsion to extend the family's relations with society. It is enforced in many primitive societies where nothing is known of heredity and almost nothing of the connection between the father and fertility. Since the principal evil of patriarchy, for the feminists, is male tyranny based on male succession, can patriarchy be said to exist when paternity is in doubt? (Even the normally headlong Miss Millett stops short here.) If not, and if the incest taboo is neither biological nor sexual-political, might there not be some reason for retaining it in a society not dominated by men? No again. *All* families, even matriarchies, must go. Then the feminist complaint is perhaps biological after all? Yes, says Miss Firestone, and I quote her italics: *"Pregnancy is barbaric."* Breakthrough.

WHOEVER SAID women were not logical? They are fiercely logical. It is their most depressing trait as thinkers. As Nietzsche said, nothing is a truth that doesn't contain at least one laugh, but these women seem to think that whatever follows logically, even unto the annihilation of all reason, must be truth. The New Feminists don't seem to know when they're being funny, or when they're really thinking independently and not just reacting to men. Radical Women's Liberation was born from the rib of civil-rights activism, much as the 19th-century women's rights movement had sprung from abolitionism. The militant British suffragists who chained themselves to lamp-posts have their modern counterparts in the young women who sit-in and disrupt traffic. Where the old girls threw off their corsets and wore bloomers, *we* are bra-less and wear pants suits. But here the resemblance to historical feminism ends. And so it should, say the New Feminists. The old-time feminists may have been anti-marriage, some of them; some may even have been anti-family. But they made the mistake (yes, mistake—see footnote) of narrowing their objectives to civil rights, of campaigning for the same privileges men enjoyed instead of trying to erase the functional distinctions upon which those privileges rested. And so, when they got the vote, all further protest was pinched off.

Let us not pause to wonder how the militant women of the 1960's and 1970's could ever have expected those of the 1880's and 1890's to anticipate them.* The women who can say "Freud was a sexist" are the same women who can say, as so many militant men do, "Abraham Lincoln was a racist." Anti-historicism is a contemporary cultural disease and a feature of the insane logic of the young. But the parallels between "racism" and "sexism," both of them manifestations of the New Left paranoia that has arisen within the last five years (and symbiotically linked in Yoko Ono's remark, "Woman is the nigger of the world"), should interest us. America is "a racist nation"; even more is it "a sexist nation." Women were the first slaves and they are the last (WL thinks wives

* For some of the New Feminists, the women's movement began to go wrong as early as 1848, when Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott called the convention at Seneca Falls, N.Y. that issued the Seneca Falls Declaration of Rights and Sentiments. "Although it [the Declaration] conveys a vivid sense of the depth, pervasiveness, and subtlety of women's oppression, as well as of its legal manifestations, it conspicuously avoids an analysis of the family, and of the connection between woman's primary responsibilities there, and her exclusion from public life. To question the sacred rightness of the family, and women's place in it, would have brought upon these women a storm of outrage far beyond what they actually suffered. Feminist imagination, which envisaged radically new forms of dress, rebelled at the traditional marriage ceremony and the surrender of the maiden name, attacked established religion and male dominance of education and the professions—the fearless feminist imagination balked at an attack on the family. Although the early feminists cannot be accused of the mistake of the later ones in concentrating solely on the ballot as the key to equality, they dared only to insist on sharing public life with men—not to insist on men's sharing the burdens of home and family." —Connie Brown and Jane Seitz, "You've Come a Long Way, Baby" in *Sisterhood Is Powerful* (edited by Robin Morgan, Random House, 602 pp., $8.95).

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should be paid for doing housework and taking care of children). When the New Left embraced violence, the girls in the movement found that they were up front where police could club them on television and in the back room the rest of the time, functioning as secretaries and sex partners. These are the girls who radicalized Women's Lib, turning it into a (jealous?) parody of the Black Power movement and reacting in monkey-see, monkey-do fashion to men as separatist blacks were reacting to whites.

The title of the bible of lumpen rad-lib, *Sisterhood Is Powerful*, is a play on "black is beautiful" (though you'll never hear a white sister say, "I, a woman, am beautiful." Unlike black women, who have a stake in the reconstitution of the black family, she rejects the hypocritical homage of the master sex). Along with Kate Millett, many of the contributors to this volume feel they can assail prejudice based on sexual distinctions in the same way that they assail prejudice based on racial ones—as if admitting that women (or Negroes) are different from men (or whites) would be giving prejudice a blank check. In this I think they are doubly wrong, and of course it is now fashionable—at the express wish of Black Power groups—to grant that racial differences do indeed exist and to recognize them in a form of cultural apartheid. This inconsistency doesn't seem to bother the feminist ideologues. They had discovered no egalitarianism on the Left, not even on the black Left. Stokely Carmichael had said, "The only position for women in SNCC is prone." The racist plague faded rather quickly into the sexist terror without changing its basic character as a system of *political* oppression dedicated to perpetuating mythological differences between people. The girls seem to feel they are more like Women the less like "women" they behave: taking karate in men's classes, using foul language (in the *Sisterhood* collection of pieces, those by high-school girls are more belligerent than those by lesbians; if this is the way they talk to their boyfriends, then there's no sexiness in feminism at any age), adopting the adversary style of Black Power, which at the time of the split with the male Left was the most powerful adversary style around. While the feminist movement has yet to produce a flaming heroine on a par with Bernadette Devlin, the current media favorite—and successor to James Baldwin, LeRoi Jones, Eldridge Cleaver, and Bobby Seale—is Angela Davis. Girls have the real *machismo* spirit.

ANOTHER THING that was around at the time was *Human Sexual Response*. It is darkly suspected in Women's Lib circles that people who bought the book were so shocked by the findings on the clitoral orgasm that they clammed up about it for fear of toppling the male power structure. Certainly men can't be accused of suppressing the book; it was a best-seller, front-page news, and there were paperback trots to explain the technical language. Yet life goes on as before, a male-dominated hell. Women's Lib's answer to this has been to make the clitoral orgasm its winged victory, its revolutionary torch of truth. You cannot pick up a piece of Lib propaganda without coming across it, nor can you escape the polemical logic within which its value to the movement is as tightly sealed as a desert flower in a cube of Lucite.

Dr. Alice S. Rossi writes (in *Voices of the New Feminism*): "Implicit in both psychological theory of sex differences and the Freudian vaginal-orgasm theory was a basic assumption that women should be exclusively dependent on men for their sexual pleasure, hiding from view the realization that masturbation may be different from, but not necessarily less gratifying sexually than, sexual intercourse." (This is putting it mildly. What was "hidden from view," until Masters and Johnson, was that a female with the aid of an electric vibrator could achieve twenty to fifty orgasms in a single hour.) Susan Lydon (in *Sisterhood Is Powerful*): "The definition of normal feminine sexuality as vaginal . . . was a part of keeping women down, of making them sexually, as well as economically, socially and politically subservient." Kate Millett: ". . . the conditions of patriarchal society have had such profound effects upon female sexuality that its function has been drastically affected, its true character long distorted and long unknown. This is remarkable evidence of culture's ability to affect physiology." But is it? Where is the evidence that female sexuality has been "distorted" and "unknown"? Distorted by what standards, unknown to whom? Apart from the fact that social conditioning actively discourages masturbation in the male as well as in the female, what is there to show that women—half the human race—ever accepted the definition of their sexuality as vaginal or ever supposed they were operating in intercourse without a clitoris? Not all of them read Freud and go to analysis. Not all of them know men who do, either. That sex education doesn't stress the existence of the clitoris (another scrap of feminist "evidence") is less a reflection of Freudian error than of the fact that sex education is concerned with human reproduction, in which the clitoris plays no part. It wouldn't even if we got rid of the family. Even if we found a way for women to have their babies in bottles—like those artificial wombs scientists have already grown sheep in—the sperm would still have to travel up the river from New Orleans. I see no mark of patriarchal oppression in satisfying the curiosity of children on this point. Sex education in the schools is anyway a very recent development. What about those of us, those many millions of us, who never were formally sexually-educated—who "got it in the streets"? This is supposed to be horrible, yet is it likely that we would have learned from our little

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boyfriends and girlfriends that one sex was meant to be subservient to the other? The sexuality of young children is still very much underrated. I suspect "street" experiences are much more common, occur earlier, and leave a more lasting impression of the physiology of sex than the formal acquaintance with biological facts which is what most people mean when they talk about sex education.

Finally, what about Masters's and Johnson's guinea pigs, who performed so vividly: were they adequate representatives of society or were they flown in from the jungle? And so far as the scandalous nature of the book goes (which is what presumably accounted for its high sales), isn't it reasonable to suppose that the scandal attached less to its contents than to the authors' methods of research? The book was an event in medical annals, but even before its findings were released there was considerable eye-catching publicity about the techniques that were being used to assemble them. The feminists tend to overlook that; all they care about is the story that Masters and Johnson told, which, for people less hung up on the injustices of the social order and less accustomed to getting their ideas about life out of books, was consequently less of a revelation.

WE MUST REMEMBER that the feminist movement is full of bookish, romantic, and highly suggestible middle-class girls who have probably suffered serious psychological wounds at the hands of bookish, romantic, and highly suggestible middle-class boys. To rearrange Kate Millett's conclusion, culture has a remarkable ability to affect culture. The contagion of feminism shows that. It is an epidemic of sexism in the head. Look, you progressive woman, you—you have a clitoris, here it is in this book. And since a clitoris is better than a penis (Millett: "The clitoris, one might point out, is the only human organ which is specific to sexuality and to sexual pleasure: the penis has other functions both in elimination and in reproduction") . . . well, the rest of the nightmare follows, notwithstanding the fact that at least some of the men who write sex books have been honest enough to admit that they really don't understand female sexuality. Freud was one. Masters is another—that was why he got Johnson. Yet it is one thing to say that male misconceptions of female sexuality have caused confusion and upset, and even—it would be fair to say—that they have caused neurotic confusion and upset. But it is nonsense to insist that they constitute a system of oppression from which we can find no escape in society as we know it. The total genital orientation of so much feminist thinking on sex is really remarkable, and it's totally non-erotic, tasteless, vegetable sex, too. This insensitive, "strong" stuff isn't the transparent bravado of girls trying to act tough; they *are* tough, and the first thought that occurs to you is how in the world anyone would manage to oppress them—just let him try. The second thought is, what contempt for women. The picture we get of women is a misogynist's delight: creatures so stupidly submissive to male authority in all things we wonder why we are supposed to think them worth rescuing.

The humiliated woman, the woman as weakling, as victim, keeps turning up in Kate Millett's book—not in her account of Victorian thought and literature, which produces some samples of a rebellious and sane feminism, but in the chapters on contemporary society. She doesn't look very hard at the world we live in. Her "literary reflection" consists of the works of Henry Miller, Norman Mailer, and D. H. Lawrence. (Poor Lawrence! First de Beauvoir and now Millett. The only woman to show him mercy has been Katherine Anne Porter, who called him a "panting, agonized man.") In Jean Genet, of whom she approves, she finds a ringing affirmation of the male principle in all its vicious splendor. Here, she says, in the parody world of the homosexual, a world of sadistic pimps and masochistic queens, is the truth about "masculine" and "feminine" roles in the straight world.

The pornographic fantasies of Miller and Mailer, added to those of Genet and analyzed detail by detail, as in stop-action photography, amount to an excessive preoccupation with buggery. (It's at this point that we wonder whether Stokely Carmichael really *meant* to say "prone.") As against this we have nothing but Lawrence's odyssey into sexual mysticism, hardly a contrast and in Millett's treatment essentially a rehash of de Beauvoir. Nothing from Cheever, O'Hara, Styron, Salinger, or Updike—just to mention some Americans besides Miller and Mailer; no Europeans besides Lawrence; nothing from Proust, the greatest homosexual artist of the century. And—incredibly—nothing from a woman writer. If the aim is to present the literary reflection of society's attitudes toward women, surely we might look at the writings of women.

Miss Millett's literary preferences are very odd, not merely because they keep presenting the same disconcerting sexual image over and over, but because they reveal an apparent need to believe somehow that the lowest and most violent forms of sexual expression represent the truth about heterosexual relations. Miss Millett takes pornographic description literally and this leads her astray. No matter how wild or ludicrous the event —and in the Miller section you laugh even while reading her scornful denunciations—she believes she is handing us an instance of caste and conquest. Nothing that happens between the sexes is exempt from such categorization. If you were to say to Miss Millett, "Jack fell down and broke his crown and Jill came tumbling *after*," she would say, "A clear case of sexual politics," and carefully note the double significance of the word "crown."

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We have lately learned that she is a homosexual and the knowledge is worth a great deal to the opposition—such knowledge always is—but not if it thinks it puts her, and those of her sisters who may yet come out as lesbians, safely back in their places.

For what are their places? Do they now retire from the stage? The stars of the show?

There is no doubt that *Sexual Politics* has had an impact. Elegantly furnished with scholarly trophies—it is in fact a doctoral thesis—and written with furious energy, it was an apologia the critics could take seriously at just the time when the movement needed something to take the public's mind off the ugly women screaming on talk shows. But it is no different in substance from the main bulk of Women's Lib propaganda. As I said at the beginning of this article, feminism is just a way of talking about oneself; ideologically, it can be anything you want to make it. There is no reason why the ideological content of the present feminist revival could not be lesbianism or, as it might with more circumspection call itself, bisexuality. Much as we might cringe from such a prospect, could it be worse than what we are going through right now? And there might be some abatement in tension if the next batch of books by aggrieved women (for they *will* go on writing these testaments—it's a tenet of feminism that every woman is a philosopher) could be informally grouped around some such forthright theme as "My Life with Mary Ann" instead of "Feeling Insulted as a Woman."

It would be good if all those fed-up wives, indignant earth mothers, abused secretaries, and hounded sex objects declared themselves. If those others would all go visit them once in a while—those newly fixated on the subject of orgasm, those bemused by the new life-styles, those whimperers to whom any behavior is feminine except delivering a baby, and, above all, those who say, "I can't imagine what lesbians *do* . . ."—it would be almost as great a blessing as the perfect Pill.

And such perfect logic, too.

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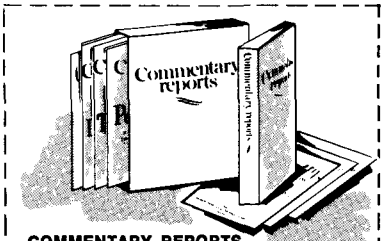

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The Advocate

Dorothy Rabinowitz

AFFABILITY is native to his spirit, as clear skin and good health habits to his person. His dress, his grooming, and the stylish deployment of his features reflect the harmony of a young man on excellent terms with his resources. Liking and liked in return, a lover of sports and family circles, good cars and sun tans, his life style would, in ordinary political times, properly be called bourgeois. No one can call him that now, though his present version of the good life was known once largely in fraternity houses. Indeed, to the cooler political eyes of another era, a young man of his sort would have been so appraised: in truth, were it not for the company he keeps and the tempest for which he stands, a young man of his simplicity might be so appraised today. His membership in a radical lawyers' collective has taken him far. He joined shortly after leaving law school, after a few years of floundering with dull cases in private practice. Though with traces in him yet more jock than visionary, the move marked a clear maturing point in his life. He took up his new work seriously, immediately, as he had always taken up challenges which interested him.

He came to his membership in the radical collective with a certain self-possession and an enthusiasm not unlike that he had brought to other circles he had joined in his thirty-odd years. In addition, the fellow members he meets now are wonderful company, by far the best he has known for style and self-confidence—and brains—all qualities which have always won his deepest esteem. Indeed, some of them awe him with their brains. Here too are the sort of men—serious, grim, unsocial, unkempt—he never would have crossed paths with in college: he is sorry for that now. He perceives that there is a special dimension to them, a kind of importance: they reflect the stance and the doctrine of their revolutionist clients as though they had known these things all their lives.

With some eagerness to test himself now in these intellectual waters, he looks to his own capacities as he has never thought to look before. (Concentration, he discovered early in life, served him well, as quickness served others.) He had never had to consider the quality of his mind. It was understood, early on, that whatever he wanted to do, he would do without trouble. The study of law imposed no severe tests that way. He mastered the formulas implicit in the discipline, was in fact terribly interested in individual cases in his texts, fond of following them to their solution. He always wanted to know how things came out, once he had spent time being interested in them. The role of lawyer with its pleasant status, its elastic demand upon the intellect, was well enough suited to the furnishings of his mind, his observers would have thought.

HIS TIME for self-questioning has come in the radical collective, partly as a consequence of the furnishings of his mind. (Only in the most extreme circumstances of his life has he experienced a sense of thinness, an inability to sort things out clearly in a given time.) Now he has come to feel, in the presence of his lean and hungry colleagues and of his raging clients, a flood of guilt. He believes it is because of the advantages to which he was born and which he has enjoyed all his life. Then, his brainy, somber colleagues make him feel guilty, for reasons he understands but dimly. With them his confusion is twofold. The absence in him of any critical intellect makes it possible for him to perceive them as men of extraordinary brilliance (and that absence makes it possible, too, for him not to know why he feels disadvantaged in their presence). And he is disposed now to feel enormous guilt in the presence of his clients, whose dismal and reckless lives are so unlike his own, so unlike any he has known. He does not know where he gets the right to represent people who have done so much and suffered so much.

Finally, for his guilt, there is nothing which would account for him in this courtroom. Nothing, in his combative presence before the court, which he is now sworn to despise (he had never before hated anybody impersonally) which he could account for: nothing in his accomplishment, his knowledge, or the passion of his mind which earned him the position he now enjoys. The idea he finds easiest to understand is that he is at the center of the political heroism of his era. The political trial is the great issue of his time. His collective, college audiences, the entire Left movement, Old and New, the media, have helped him define himself in his new historic role. Nonetheless, his understanding of his political position in no way diminishes his sense of guilt. Indeed, political position and guilt are one to him: the two are hopelessly confused in his mind. He goes to synagogues and churches to speak, gives television interviews, and fund-raising speeches: his predominant theme is guilt, his guilt, the national guilt. (His detractors have noted sourly of him, there is nothing so powerful as a neurosis whose time has come.)

In truth, he has things to feel guilty about. Awed, a not quite comprehending intimate of the law officially, he feels alien in the courtroom. (Some part of him still regards the law as an instrument of hallowed tradition, despite the support of his political tutelage.) With some relief he regards his clients'

DOROTHY RABINOWITZ *here presents the third in a series of portraits. In previous essays she discussed "The Activist Cleric" (September 1970) and "The Radicalized Professor" (July 1970).*

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mocking challenge to a complex and awesome system of jurisprudence. With their impatient scuffling, their fierce rage against complexity and ceremony, he is easier. Wedded to them in their denial of the Law, its mystiques and its great issues, he feels a satisfaction he had till then not known before the bar. All things, he is now faintly aware, are reducible by collective effort.

His identification with his clients, the also-alienated, increases his already heavy burden of guilt. Indeed, his behavior before the court gives evidence that he believes *he* is the accused, rather than the representative of the accused. The function of his peculiar, wide-ranging guilt is born, he does not understand, not of an excess of sensibility, but of incapacity to accept disapproval from any quarter, even, strangely, from his avowed enemies. He is, for example, in dread of the judge and obliged to call that dread rebellion. (His now long tenure as an advocate in political trials has permitted him to develop ornate disguises for his dread.) He appears almost as rebellious as his unhappy clients. He giggles with the most antic of them, balks at procedure, laughs helplessly at displays of judicial stiffness. He sulks when reprimanded for this behavior and worries, oftentimes, what it is about him that might cause the judge to dislike him personally.

He is, curiously, without the immunity which insulates most of his clients: the ideologue's scorn for his enemies, the relish for their hatred, the assumption that the approval of one's allies is comfort enough. Only he, oddly, can tolerate no blame from his enemies. Indeed, the extraordinary displays of his feelings, his sense of personal grievance—louder even than those of his clients most of the time—bear witness to his strange sensitivity. And those he reviles—the judge, the other officers of the court, the representatives of the press—pain him anew every day by returning his dislike. Though his mind tells him the reason, he cannot understand it in his heart.

His political conduct, he has learned from his friends in the collective and the Guild, *is* his profession now. Political conduct, he understands now, is the opposite of proper behavior of counsel in the courtroom. Committed as he is to his knowledge, his new politico-legal profession, he is most unhappy to accept charges of misconduct and impropriety directed at him by the court or by the press.

From his clients, and from older-model radicals in his profession, comes the fount of his courage to be other than the self he has always known. It was not easy for him, at first, to overcome his affability, his automatic politeness—not for nothing had he learned to say "pardon" for "what." Too early and too often he had learned that manners were a measure of something important. Sped by his instinct for avoiding the disapproval of those nearest him (before taking into account the possibility of any other), he perceived that reviling the court, the older man on the bench, the pigs, and the fascist press, had nothing to do with him personally: these were the political styles of his new circle. As he had been instructed, the enemy of his friends was his enemy. On this lesson he concentrated, screaming in the courtroom with the best of them. Feeling unhappy when people should think ill of him for this, he turns to his older, radical colleagues who assure him that his is the greatest virtue in these ugly exchanges.

His colleagues offer him models and succor, but for politics he has learned to depend on the leadership of his clients. These, he knows, spend long hours in their cells, poring over the wisdom of Mao, Che, Fanon, Lenin, and Abbie Hoffman. Of such learning they know more than he can ever hope to comprehend (they spend more time at books than he has ever done), though comprehend he must, to some degree. He is, he knows, political spokesman as well as advocate, and while he defers to his clients, the accused, in these matters, he has at the same time consented to reeducate the public in the higher understanding of political and social matters his clients enjoy. (As the members of his collective agree, there are no better savants on the forces which shaped our century than the accused.) Taught by them that he may teach, he is secretly awed by the wide range of their reference and at their patience with reading, on their own, books of such density as would have made him fretful had they been assigned in a college course. He is frequently astonished at encountering observers of his clients who are unimpressed by their intellectual stature.

He has had to make certain adjustments to observed contradictions in this matter. If, in the very nature of their talent for entrapment, the failure of their plots, their propensity for selecting police as allies, their tendency to plant bombs made of clay and oatmeal and devices otherwise thwarted by police-work, his clients have exhibited signs of something less than quickness, he is able to adjust. He understands that in the politics of revolution, losing is really winning.

And if certain other of his clients paint their faces and their chests and chant Oms, amid barnyard howls and ethnic jibes at the court, he understands it is all part of the plan.

He is able to adjust to contradictions, for example, by reasoning that it is the very superiority of his clients which marked them for capture and the prospect of many years in jail, if convicted. He had learned not a few things from his collective and his clients by now, handled them with all the concentration with which he handled lessons in the past. With all his new skill, he takes in stride the whole matter of conspiracy, among others. He believes passionately in a vast conspiracy of the courts, acting as an instrument of government to repress dissent; that there is no figure representing law who is not an active arm of government repression; that the police, the courts, the judge, work hand in hand with the government in this conspiracy; that the judge is a conspirator with the prosecutor; that the press is, with few exceptions, in conspiracy with the government and the prosecution. At the same time, his clients have been charged with conspiracy which, he points out, is a ludicrous concept. The very notion of conspiracy, he points out, is paranoid, another symptom of a sick system, a sick society. He has no difficulty with his two positions on conspiracy. It is all part of the big picture.

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All these things he has digested and he believes. Yet he is not really able to rid himself of the question of disapproval for very long. All he has done is listen and learn. His times told him that being a lawyer —a profession, merely—was one dry-as-dust affair, no better than being in business. A radical lawyer, in a collective, put another dimension on the matter entirely. (It occurred to him, much like the difference between being a detective and a traffic policeman.) The radical collective invited him to join the most stylish and, by the lights of his culture, the most prestigious of circles in which to practice his profession. There were fringe benefits. He found it pleasing to confirm in himself (he never thought otherwise) that all his activities proceeded from his decency, rather than from his professional or otherwise selfish interests. The life of the radical lawyer was much in accord with his native value system that way. He had always known that the gesture is more important than the substance, the motive more important than the act, and, as he had always learned, the thought more important than the gift. He understood that the mere *attitude* implicit in being a radical lawyer said more for him, and more quickly, than any professional act of his could do. Irresistibly, revolutionary politics called to him: the chance to stand in the vanguard of a great social movement; for a living, to be a terrific guy.

As choices of professions go, his did not disappoint him, except insofar as being disliked pained him, the small troubles which nagged him when he had to make serious adjustments to his perceptions. He perceived that his closest allies were people who bore toward other people, indeed whole societies, murderous attitudes; that his clients *meant* malevolence even when they did not succeed in the doing; that the motive behind the deed was annihilating; that some lives were expendable according to underground ethic, and gestures of destruction part of the overall catechism. These perceptions, after some small trouble, he took in stride, and under tutelage, he concentrated on the two most important attitudes for the radical lawyer: (1) that his clients are innocent victims of charges entirely trumped up by the state in a war of extermination against dissidents and blacks; (2) if his clients are guilty as charged, they have every right to be.

These two attitudes carry him far toward peaceful adjustment. Small matters which nag at his reason, his respectable upbringing—gun-toting, underground networks, bombs, anti-Semitic pronouncements, suicidal rampages against the police, directives from Algeria—all these he ascribes to the greater revolutionary wisdom of his collective. Now a member of the sharpest fraternity around, he is eager to be worthy of them. With the best will in the world he is learning, concentrating, to see the things they see in exactly the way they see them: Che, Fanon, Cleaver, the United States war of extermination. If he has a question, he holds his peace, confident the answer exists. All his life, he has learned to keep quiet around people smarter than himself.

Beyond Particularism: On Ethical Culture & the Reconstructionists

Michael A. Meyer

THE INTELLECTUAL history of modern Jewry is singularly repetitive. As early as the 18th century, West European Jewish intellectuals defined the basic problem of retaining Jewish identity in a world both attractive and at the same time manifesting varying degrees of hostility. The following two hundred years largely represent the gradual process of one generation after another losing its unself-conscious Jewish identity and reacting with varying degrees of affirmation or rejection to Western civilization. The reflections of the newly acculturated *maskilim* of Galicia in the 1820's closely parallel those of the Mendelssohn circle a generation earlier; with the exception of the Zionists and the socialists, the countless defense pamphlets written by Jews against anti-Semites all through the modern period nearly always repeat the same familiar, usually apologetic arguments.

Jewish responses to modernity all appear as reactions to the problem of Jewish particularism: inwardly- and outwardly-directed attempts to justify the continued existence of the Jews as a separate

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entity. For pre-modern Jews that was never a problem: the concept of chosenness made the question irrelevant if not blasphemous. But once the divinely ordained status of the Jewish people was called into doubt, some human reason had to be found. In descending degree of loftiness these justifications included the religious mission of the Jews, the inherent value of Jewish culture, the inability to achieve universalism except as mediated through a particular tradition, the persistence of anti-Semitism directed even at the convert from Judaism, and, finally, the psychological damage resulting from a denial of a conscious or unconscious element in one's identity.

From the beginning of modern Jewish history there have of course been large numbers of Jews for whom no justification of continued Jewish existence carried sufficient weight to counterbalance the very real deprivations which they suffered as Jews; European society even after the secularization process spurred by the Enlightenment and the French Revolution still remained notably Christian and notably anti-Semitic. Again and again many Jews were led to think that the solution to human conflicts must lie beyond all particularisms and that the last great task of the Jewish people would be to abdicate its own separate existence, thus supplying an example and a model for Christianity. Though Moses Mendelssohn, standing at the very beginning of the modern period, came to realize through his own tortured experience with the Christian community of his day the naiveté of such thinking, many of his followers in Germany did not. They represent the first in a long line of individual and common attempts by Jews either to divest Judaism of all particularism, leaving it a ceremonial vessel of universalism, or to go further, and divest themselves of Judaism to seek fellowship among others similarly "liberated" from religious tradition.

It is with some trepidation that a Jewish historian tries to deal with this latter phenomenon in its individual and group manifestations. The subjects he must consider are frequently of the highest intellectual and moral caliber. Their motives and goals are unimpeachable. Yet the temptation lingers to ask whether all such longings for universalism, however noble, do not in many (most?) instances represent an attempt to escape from the odium of Jewishness.

IN American Jewish history there is perhaps no better known effort to move beyond particularism than the Ethical Culture movement, founded nearly a century ago. Though familiar, at least by name, to most Jews, especially in the New York area, the history of Ethical Culture until recently remained to be written. A new book by Howard B. Radest, executive director of the American Ethical Union, now fills this gap—and does so with remarkable objectivity.*

Felix Adler, the founder of the movement, was the son of the rabbi of Temple Emanu-El and heir apparent to its pulpit. Upon his return from rabbinical and secular studies in Europe, he was asked to deliver a Sabbath sermon, which he called "The Judaism of the Future." Quoted in part by Radest from the Ethical Culture archives, the sermon made a familiar plea for universal religion, though Adler at this stage still preferred to call it Judaism: ". . . we discard the narrow spirit of exclusion, and loudly proclaim that Judaism was *not given to the Jews alone, but that its destiny is to embrace in one great moral state the whole family of men. . . .*" I suspect that Adler's words did not scandalize his Reform listeners nearly as much as Radest believes. As Reform Jews, they were accustomed to hearing Judaism spoken of in universal terms. It was apparently Adler's rejection of theism that was crucial in determining his break with Temple Emanu-El. In fact, it was Adler himself who shortly thereafter refused to accept the pulpit and, if we can accept his own testimony, did so on theological grounds.

Radest makes much of the influence of Emerson and American Transcendentalist thought upon Adler. While Adler did sometimes refer to Emerson, the basic philosophical influence upon him seems to have been German Idealism and especially Immanuel Kant. Here, too, Adler stands in a long tradition. The attraction for Jews of Kantian philosophy—particularly its theological consequences—has been pronounced and continuous since the days of Kant himself. The disciples who best understood the Königsberg master in his own time were Jews like Solomon Maimon, Marcus Herz, Lazarus Bendavid. Thereafter the line of his adapters to Judaism runs from Solomon Steinheim to Hermann Cohen to Leo Baeck. The primacy which Kant ascribed to morality immediately attracted Jews who discovered a secularized form of the *mitzva* in the categorical imperative and the Kantian sense of duty. Kantian rationalism was equally appealing to a Jewry justifiably fearful of the anti-Semitic consequences of religious romanticism. In Kant, Adler found the philosophical underpinning for a religion centering upon morality which did indeed have its American counterpart in Emerson. Rejecting the God of revelation, Adler moved to a veneration of the universal moral Ideal which he regarded as a new and higher form of religion. Setting aside ritual, ceremony, and prayer, he retained the language of faith. His creed was this:

> I believe in the supreme excellence of righteousness; I believe that the law of righteousness will triumph in the universe over all evil; I believe that in the law of righteousness is the sanctification of human life; and I believe that in furthering and fulfilling that law I also am hallowed in the service of the unknown God.

But, as Adler stressed again and again, creed really did not matter much. What counted was the deed. There could be a multiplicity of beliefs within Ethical Culture as long as there was unanimity on commitment to moral action. The weekly lectures, the Ethical Culure schools, were all in-

**Toward Common Ground: The Story of the Ethical Societies in the United States,* Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 348 pp., $8.50.

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tended to prepare the participants to act morally in the community. And in fact the Ethical Culture Society created an enviable record of successful social-welfare projects in New York City.

Those who in 1876 first accepted Adler's religion of morality and his practical program were mostly middle- and upper-class German Jews. Jewish names predominate among the first members of the Society, and the early financial supporters seem to have been almost exclusively Jewish. From the Reform movement these first- and second-generation Americans were already accustomed to regard religion as principally concerned with ethics and to reject religious ceremonialism as primitive. From the earliest days of Reform in Germany, the sermon had assumed centrality in the service and had been frequently turned into an ethical discourse for the moral and spiritual *Erbauung* (edification) of its hearers. From this it was only a small step to the removal of all ceremonialism in favor of a somewhat longer informative and inspirational lecture. Adler made the transition particularly comfortable by his high evaluation of the Jewish prophetic tradition and of Jewish messianism. Those Jews who joined Ethical Culture could feel that they were not really rejecting themselves as Jews but only fulfilling the highest aspirations inherent in their tradition.

The preponderance of Jews in the Ethical Culture movement may have been a bit embarrassing to Adler and his Jewish followers, though Radest gives no evidence on this score. It does seem at least surprising that, while the trustees remained largely Jewish, the first professional leaders assisting Adler were all Christians, mostly with some clerical training. One cannot avoid the suspicion that the Jewish Ethical Culturists were trying to make up for the small reponse their proffered universalism evoked within the Christian community by clothing the professional leadership of their movement with names like William MacIntire Salter, S. Burns Weston, and Stanton Coit.

Adler's stimulating Sunday-morning lectures attracted thousands to Carnegie Hall. Yet the large response seems to have been more a veneration of the man and an appreciation of his charismatic qualities than any deep-seated devotion to the ideals of the movement. Those who came listened, but they were hesitant to participate. "From time to time a choir was organized," Radest tells us, "but the congregation would not sing." Of those who attended, many did not bother to go through the procedure of officially joining the organization.

Within the Jewish community it was Reform Judaism that seemed most threatened by Ethical Culture. Itself committed to a universal interpretation of Judaism, it could hardly attack Ethical Culture on these grounds. Reform rabbis, and notably Kaufmann Kohler, later president of Hebrew Union College, attacked Adler for his non-theistic interpretation of religion rather than for his break with Judaism. But in reality there was little need for Reform to fear. Ethical Culture remained small. Efforts to establish societies outside New York and even in Europe often floundered and were seldom more than moderately successful. The total membership of all the societies until World War II remained well below four thousand.

RADEST DEALS very cogently with the problems that prevented the expansion of this potentially universal religion beyond the narrowest limits. In part the failure actively to seek new members was due to the frank elitism which prevailed during the first generation. The founders of the movement regarded themselves as a moral vanguard composed of the educated, successful, and socially committed. Adler himself was suspicious of popularization and ambivalent about pressing for organizational growth. Adler's original conception was that of a society in which each member played an active role in the intellectual life and social projects of the organization. The leader was conceived as teacher, prophetic voice, social critic. But in the course of time, the changing membership of the Society began to regard the relationship between leader and member more on the model of minister and congregation than as an ethical partnership among equals. They wanted a pastor as much as a prophet and even favored the introduction of ritual. The English society went so far as to introduce a new form of Gregorian chant. Adler's vision had looked beyond such "clericalism" and, as Adler continued to be senior leader until his death in 1933, his view competed with that of some of his younger colleagues, preventing any unified conception of the member-to-leader relationship. The failure to establish any permanent ritual forms or a solid organizational base caused the focus of the Society to remain upon the personalities of its leaders and thus greatly aggravated the loss suffered by the death of Adler and a number of his colleagues within a very short period in the early 1930's.

Adler's undisputed leadership of the movement for nearly sixty years proved an increasing disadvantage to Ethical Culture. Firm in his Kantian Idealism, Adler failed to respond with sufficient flexibility to the new currents of thought coming into prominence after World War I. Despite the crushing experience of the war, he held fast to his faith in progress, even if he now admitted it could not be scientifically demonstrated; despite the increased influence of ethical relativism, he continued to assert his belief that the good and the right were capable of determination; despite the popularity of Freudianism, he remained steadfast in his opposition to psychoanalysis and his insistence upon the sacredness and inviolability of the personal life; and despite the quickened search for a more radical political philosophy even among many of his members, Adler unconditionally and consistently rejected Marxism as a violation of individual ethical responsibility. Thus, in the 1920's and 1930's, Adler's lectures, now drawing diminishing audiences, seemed notably out of keeping with the times.

The increasing lack of ideological consensus in Ethical Culture was joined to a similar lack of agreement with regard to specific social issues. Adler and the orig-

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inal circle were conservative and reformist in their approach. But after the war a number of the leaders and some of the members began to look for more radical solutions. The society was split between meliorists and socialists, preventing it from taking an official position on specific issues. The lack of ideological consensus was not critical in a movement which focused upon the deed; the failure to achieve moral consensus was crucial.

Nor did Ethical Culture continue to appeal to later generations of Jews as it had in the first years. For the East European immigrants, who gradually came to dominate the Jewish scene, Jewish identity involved a good deal more than allegiance to the prophetic tradition. "Jewishness has taken the place of Judaism," Adler complained. "Its emphasis is race, not religion." Despite continued Jewish participation in Ethical Culture, from the point of view of Jewish intellectual history, Adler's society can be linked only to the experience of the German Reform Jew newly resident in America.

THE DIFFERENT and yet remarkably similar response of the East European Jew, achieving Americanization half-a-century later, in the 1920's and 1930's, can be illumined only by turning to a movement which attempted an analogous transformation within the Jewish community itself. The history and problems of Mordecai Kaplan's Reconstructionism in many ways parallel those of Adler's Ethical Culture movement. Again we are fortunate to have available now a critical and quite objective study, by Charles S. Liebman, which sheds much light on this second attempt to respond to the question of Jewish existence in the American environment.*

Even more than Ethical Culture, Reconstructionism has been guided by the charisma and prolific writings of a single man, Mordecai Kaplan, who founded the Society for the Advancement of Judaism in 1922 and has remained the venerated mentor of Reconstructionism for nearly fifty years despite his present retirement from direct organizational responsibility. Aside from his students at the Jewish Theological Seminary, Kaplan's first adherents in the 1920's and 1930's were well-to-do first- and second-generation East European Jews with some American education and a degree of social conscience. They were unhappy with the existing forms of Judaism and felt powerfully attracted to Kaplan's personality. Like Adler's adherents, they were troubled by supernaturalist theology and sought some religious accommodation with the fruits of science. But unlike the early Ethical Culturists, Kaplan's followers were the products of traditional Jewish homes and continued to value Jewish customs and rituals. They were looking for Americanization and rationalization within the framework of Judaism.

Well aware of Ethical Culture, Kaplan consciously borrowed from Adler. As Liebman notes, he preferred the term "leader" to that of "rabbi" and later modeled the *Reconstructionist* magazine on the format of the Society's journal. Theologically, Kaplan was also not far removed from Adler. He, too, abandoned the traditional concept of a personal God in favor of an impersonal conception linked to man via ethics. Like Adler, he spoke of the "Power that makes for Righteousness" and rejected traditional Jewish conceptions regarding the Sinaitic revelation and otherworldly salvation. The Reconstructionists, like the Ethical Culturists, took theology seriously, refusing assent to any doctrine which seemed at variance with science. They, too, were embarrassed by the theological particularism inherent in the concept of the Chosen People, a notion which Kaplan alone among Jewish thinkers was eventually willing to abandon. The philosophical influences upon Kaplan, however, were different from those operative upon Adler. Kaplan's thinking was molded in America where he received virtually all of his education. Drawing also upon Kant and Durkheim, Kaplan shaped his theology mainly on the model of the then popular functionalism of John Dewey and other American Pragmatists. German Idealism was not sacred for East European Jews as it was for the first generation of Ethical Culture.

Had it not been for his own and his followers' emotional loyalty to Judaism, Kaplan might have led a later generation of American Jews down a path very similar to Adler's. But American Jews of East European origin did not come out of a Reform tradition which more than a century earlier in Germany had already confined Judaism to the status of a religious denomination. In Russia and Poland Judaism had remained *Yiddishkeit*, an intense national feeling which persisted even after the complete rejection of traditional Jewish religion. For the East European Jews in America a crisis of Jewish faith did not imply the abandonment of Judaism. They were quite ready to accept Kaplan's definition of Judaism as a civilization complementing the American one. Transforming the *mitzvot* into folkways or "sancta" made it possible to preserve ethnic allegiance and emotional ties without commitment to what seemed the outworn notion of a God commanding specifics of religious observance. It also retained for Reconstructionism traditional and concrete modes of expression, preventing the movement from falling victim to the plague of excessive abstraction which afflicted Ethical Culture.

PERHAPS THE MOST striking similarity between the two movements is not ideological but structural. In each case intellectual influence far outdistanced organizational growth. Like Adler, Kaplan was ambivalent about expanding the practical scope of his movement. He preferred to exert influence through his writings, his contact with students at the Seminary, and the *Reconstructionist* magazine. Like Ethical Culture, Reconstructionism was organizationally centered around the original society in New York, with occasional efforts at founding new congregations or fellowships proving at best modestly successful. In terms

*"Reconstructionism in American Jewish Life," *American Jewish Year Book 1970* (Volume 71).

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of actual membership Reconstructionism has remained tiny when compared with Orthodoxy, Conservatism, Reform, and with Jewish secular organizations. (The Reconstructionist Foundation has about nine hundred paid members; the Federation of Reconstructionist Congregations and Fellowships has about 2,300 family members in ten congregations.) Like Ethical Culture, it has been unable to decide whether it should be a school of thought or an institutionalized religious denomination. Recently both movements have made efforts at greater organizational cohesion. In each case these efforts have been undertaken by the successors and not the founders of the movement. The most recent and probably most significant endeavor of the Reconstructionists has been the establishment of a rabbinical school in Philadelphia with a curriculum modeled upon Kaplan's view of Judaism as an evolving religious civilization.

It is usually assumed that the failure of Reconstructionism to grow must be attributed to Kaplan's hope that much of his program, culturally if not theologically, would be adopted by Conservative and Reform Judaism. Both groups have now indeed generally embraced Kaplan's conception of the Jews as a Zion-centered civilization as well as his devotion to social justice. His books are widely read among non-Orthodox rabbinical students, even though the original impetus of Americanization and the felt need for reconciling Judaism with scientific thought are no longer evident. Since World War II his theology has had to compete with the theism of Buber, Heschel, and Rosenzweig—all little known in America during the 30's—as well as with other non-theistic formulations. But the Holocaust and the State of Israel have given increased force to his stress upon Jewish peoplehood.

IT IS the principal contention of Liebman's article, however, that this acceptance represents at best a partial answer to the surprising incongruity between influence and organizational strength. Reconstructionist ideas possess disproportionate influence, Liebman argues, because to a very large extent they faithfully represent the ideology of American Jewry. According to Liebman, Reconstructionism holds —a set of opinions, he claims, concurred in by most American Jews— that: Jews live in two civilizations, Jewish and American, but with the latter, however, as the object of first loyalty; the separation of church and state protects the status of the American Jew; Judaism is a peoplehood, not a religion; God is not a supernatural being, but in any event theology is secondary to participation in the Jewish community; Jewish rituals enhance the life of the people, but their observance should be governed by personal choice; and Jews should support the State of Israel but need not feel obliged to live there. Thus the principles of Reconstructionism largely reflect what Liebman calls "the grassroots or folk religion of American Jews." To test his hypothesis Liebman conducted a survey to determine whether American Jews were more in agreement with Reconstructionist rabbis than with their counterparts in Orthodoxy, Conservatism, and Reform. He found that in terms of behavioral norms there was indeed a tendency to support the Reconstructionist position, though in religious concepts the laymen followed the thinking of their own rabbis. One may quarrel with the survey's use of certain loaded terms such as "supernatural" and "inconvenient," but the results do indicate quite clearly that most American Jews, who actively identify as such, practice the tenets of Reconstructionism. If so, why has Reconstructionism as a movement failed to grow?

It is Liebman's contention that while Reconstructionist ideology thus represents the folk religion of American Jews, Orthodoxy, Conservatism, and Reform are the three elitist ideologies of American Jewish religion. The latter are espoused by rabbis to their congregants who pay lip service to the ideas, but act according to the folk religion. The organizational failure of Reconstructionism is attributable to the strategic error of formulating folk religion in elitist terms. In trying to bring intellectual order into unstructured folk religion, Kaplan necessarily brought ideological considerations into the foreground and thus negated the non-ideological essence of folk religion. In giving it an elitist formulation, Liebman implies, Kaplan made the Jewish folk religion unrecognizable to the folk. He adds that Reconstructionism's growth was also hindered by Jewish reluctance officially to admit disbelief in a personal God and to affirm publicly the more than religious base of Jewish identity. Then, too, there is Reconstructionism's dilemma of advocating Jewish unity while launching yet another denomination. But Liebman's principal contention remains that Reconstructionism failed to realize that folk religion cannot be ideologized without alienating those who practice it.

WHILE THERE is doubtless something to be said for this highly original interpretation, it is my impression that Liebman's analysis is a bit procrustean and that in its attempt to employ sociological categories it pays insufficient attention to much more basic factors. It is simply not correct to argue that the non-Reconstructionist forms of Judaism represent elitist religion in the sense of ideological primacy. That primacy is limited to the seminaries and rabbinical conferences; what is practiced in the synagogues—of all three denominations—is a good deal more folk than elitist. The organizational failure of Reconstructionism, it seems to me, is much more basically and simply explained by the fact that when Kaplan came upon the scene American Orthodoxy, Conservatism, and Reform were already institutionally well established. Kaplan himself was bound to the Conservative movement through his teaching position at the Jewish Theological Seminary where, at least in the 20's and 30's, his influence was such that he could realistically hope to move Conservative Judaism in his direction. In the course of time his conception of Jewish existence was increasingly accepted in the Jewish community while his theology af-

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ter World War II lost appeal. What good reason was there for joining a separate organization whose ideas had either become common currency or were widely thought to be outdated? One need not resort to distinctions of elitist versus folk religion in order to explain the organizational failure.

Despite the efforts being made today within both Ethical Culture and Reconstructionism to expand their organizational scope, they remain, at least with regard to their initial impetus, the responses of specific generations of Jews to the question of religious and cultural identity in America. It is as yet undetermined whether these two movements have played out their historical role or whether one or both of them possess sufficient inner adaptability to assure their continued survival.

Movies

Buñuel's Art

William S. Pechter

I'VE NOW HAD occasion in two of my last three appearances in COMMENTARY to mention the work of Luis Buñuel as a mark by which to measure the shortcomings of those films under discussion. Despite this, or perhaps because of it, I've been somewhat reluctant to discuss in itself Buñuel's new film, *Tristana*. I am not among those who believe the best criticism springs always from admiration, but neither do I particularly enjoy writing about the failures of those artists about whom I care most. Of course, *Tristana* is in many ways an admirable work; masterly in the surgical precision of its style and in its elaboration of a dense network of significant detail; and its failure, if it can indeed be called this, of only the most intangible and ultimate kind. And yet, the failure seems to me a crucial one, and one endemic to Buñuel's most recent work, possibly, by its nature, to remain so. And so finally, just because there are few whose work in films I value as much as I do Buñuel's, the subject is one I don't want to turn away from.

Like all of Buñuel's greatest work, *Tristana* is about obsession, and all the elements of a classic Buñuel work are present. A beautiful and innocent young girl is orphaned and becomes the ward of her elderly uncle whose infatuation with her grows until his possessiveness has become a cage in which not only she but he, too, is trapped, and in which they both pace madly. But the uncle, Don Lope, is not the virtuous Christian and pillar of the community that one might expect from Buñuel's earlier films; he is, rather, a blasphemous freethinker who frequently sounds like no one so much as Buñuel himself, at least the Buñuel advocated by his anticlerical conscriptors. It is probably true that Buñuel has put more of some aspects of himself into the make-up of at least the surface of the uncle's character than he has into the creation of any character in his work before. And yet this character's "philosophy" proves as incapable as that of the right-thinking Francisco in *El* of containing depths of irrational impulse which well up within him, and provides as flimsy an armor against his abysmal fate. Again and again, Lope speaks out irreverently in behalf of just those "progressive" ideas Buñuel is presumed by some to "stand for," and, in the end, he is brought as low as Francisco, and out of the same weaknesses.

Which is to say that both Lope and Francisco are, despite their divergent "philosophies," essentially pathetic figures (and that Francisco, as much as Lope, is, as is so frequently denied of Buñuel, drawn with sympathy). Lope bears himself magnificently, whether casually misdirecting a policeman in pursuit of a thief ("He was weak and needed protection. . . . Men like me always defend the weak"), refusing to bargain with tradesmen even while selling his possessions at a loss ("A pawnbroker or a millionaire, they're all bloodsuckers"), scoffing at marriage ("Look at those two. . . . Smell the sickly odor of marital bliss"), or holding court with his friends in a café ("When it comes to love and women, I don't believe in sin"). On money: "Money is vile unless we give it to those most in need"; on work: "Work isn't noble as they say." Asked to arbitrate a duel which is to be decided by the drawing of first blood, he declines magisterially to participate in such a farce; reading his newspaper, he scorns its rightist politics as "idiocy." Above all, even when Tristana lies gravely

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WILLIAM S. PECHTER *writes on movies regularly in these pages. Mr. Pechter's book,* Twenty-Four Times a Second, *was recently published by Harper & Row.*

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ill and the doctor suggests the advisability of her confession: "A priest in my house! Never!"

During the scene in which Lope espouses his libertinism to his friends at the café, he scruples to make two exceptions to his claims for the freedom of love from moral inhibitions: "The wife of a friend . . . and the flower that blooms in perfect innocence." At this moment, the camera cuts to Tristana, already living in Don Lope's house, the conflict of appetites that will consume them already set in motion. "Who would harm you living with me? Where would you be safer?" Lope had asked her earlier, as she was about to move in with him, and he has told her that he wants her to love him as though he were her father. And, for a while, this tranquil arrangement prevails, rent only by Tristana's hideous dream in which she sees her uncle's severed head as clapper of one of the town's great church bells, those bells which, as the bell ringer has complained to her, have ceased to mean anything but noise to the townspeople. "You screamed as though you'd seen the devil," Lope's servant tells Tristana as she wakes from her dream with a start. Previously, the servant had described her master as a good man whose only weakness is women, but who "sprouts horns" when there is a woman he desires.

ONLY a short time after his speech in the café, Lope is selling his possessions to provide money for new clothes for Tristana so that she may discard the drab ones of her extended mourning, and promising her that he will soon free her of such "superstitions"; the camera lingering fetishistically as we, with Lope, watch Tristana at the dinner table, dipping a piece of bread into the moist yolk of an egg. Before long, the uncle has seduced his strangely unresisting ward, and, almost immediately thereafter, the household's balance of powers begins to alter. "Love must be free . . . no chains," Lope had declared earlier, and now rather wishfully affirms to Tristana, "I'd never impose my will on you. That's why we're happy. . . . You'll set the boundaries of your own freedom." But, out of Lope's earshot, she replies, when the servant remarks on how much her uncle loves her, that she might love him more if only he loved her less. Vainly, Lope tries to disguise the appearance and infirmities of his age, and all the time Tristana grows less and less subtly contemptuous of him. Immediately before Lope's first amorous advance on her, Tristana had asked him which of two identical columns of a building he preferred, replying, to his response of incomprehension, that no two things are alike and she can always choose between them; and, even as her confinement in Lope's house closes tighter around her, she sustains the illusion of her freedom by making meaningless choices between two chickpeas. When, in defiance of Lope's wishes, she goes out without him, she deliberately chooses between two streets, and, on the one she takes, meets a young painter with whom she plunges precipitantly into an affair.

Soon Lope's suspicions are aroused, and he alternately entreats and commands her to confess her infidelity to him. "Remember, I'm responsible for you . . . both husband and father, whichever I choose," he tells her. But his insistence only provokes her into greater defiance. Tauntingly, she asks him if she isn't free, and he says he'll kill her if he finds out that she has been deceiving him. Yet she grows increasingly insolent, tossing his hat in the air when he asks her to clean it, throwing out the bedroom slippers which she once attentively used to bring him, and deriding him to the servant who has become her confidante: of his sheepishness when caught looking his age, "A plucked rooster doesn't crow"; and, "If only he'd treated me like a daughter, I'd love him." "Whatever you say, I'm responsible for your actions," Lope reaffirms, but Tristana only mocks him as a hypocrite. Finally, she runs off with her lover to whom she has confessed her intimacy with her uncle; Lope makes one last effort to stop them by confronting the painter and slapping his face with a glove, only to have his formal challenge met by his being struck down by the young man's blow. Humiliated, Lope makes his way home alone through the deserted nighttime streets.

Two years pass, during which Lope inherits his family fortune which had been guarded by the devout sister with whom he feuded; he characterizes her funeral unregenerately as "that circus for priests." He continues to long for Tristana, and then one day his servant tells him that she is back, though very ill, and that she wants to see him. Tristana remains with the painter, who offers Lope satisfaction on the field of honor, which Lope declines, and tells Lope that he had proposed marriage to Tristana but she had refused him. He says that Tristana thinks she's going to die, and wants to die in Lope's house since she thinks of him as her father. Lope consents to her wishes, and returns home to tell his servant, "She won't run away from me again." His prediction proves grotesquely true: Tristana has developed a tumor on her leg, and the leg must be amputated. "To keep a woman honest, break her leg and keep her home," Lope had declared aphoristically early in the film, and now the irony echoes resonantly. He buys Tristana the piano she has wanted, and brings her gifts of her favorite pastries. At Lope's insistence, the painter comes to visit Tristana, who tells him bitterly, "If you really loved me, you wouldn't have brought me here. . . . Lope would never have brought me to another man's house." She is fitted with an artificial leg, and Lope assures her, "To some people, you're even more appealing now."

TIME PASSES, and it is Lope no less than Tristana who seems to be imprisoned within their relationship. He pushes her in her wheelchair to and from church, and stops to trade courtesies with a policeman who pays his respects to her. She has become the outwardly respectable mistress of the household, presiding over his bourgeoisification. But to a priest who advises her to marry Lope, extolling the way he has "mellowed" and telling her that "age rounds off sharp edges," she replies, "The kinder he is, the less I love him." "There's something evil about that feeling," the priest warns. She entertains herself by

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titillating the mute son of Lope's servant, but does eventually marry Lope in a church ceremony, following which she spurns Lope's efforts to help her walk and later dashes his expectations of conjugal relations derisively. At last the apotheosis of bourgeois domestic virtue has been attained; Tristana, an embittered virago, limps desperately through the house as Lope, a sick old man, drinks hot chocolate with priests in his parlor, and tells them, "After all, gentlemen, life isn't as grim as people think. Outside it's snowing, but in here it's warm. What a blessing."

We see the windswept snow outside, and then, in a wonderfully eerie juxtaposition, the parlor, its table littered with cups and pitcher, now dark and deserted. Tristana wakens from her dream as Lope urgently calls her to fetch the doctor. She goes to the adjoining room to telephone, lifts and then puts down the receiver, feigning a conversation with the doctor so that Lope may hear her. Then she returns to Lope's bedside, and calls to him in mounting excitement, but he has lapsed into unconsciousness. She throws open his windows, and the film ends with a staccato burst of evenly-timed shots: the swirling snow; she at his bedside; she putting down the receiver; she waking from her dream; Lope's head as bell clapper; their wedding; the servant's son; the painter; Lope kissing her immediately before her seduction by him; all to the accompaniment of a distorted sound like that of rushing wind and muffled bells.

I HAVE MADE so lengthy a summary of *Tristana* in part because, since it is a foreign-language film, however successful, it is likely to be less accessible than films I have discussed previously in COMMENTARY, but chiefly because, as I hope I have demonstrated, it is composed of such lucid and meticulous detail as to make synopsis amount to exegesis. I don't mean to say that things in it do not remain opaque despite attempts at explication; I believe I understand Tristana's motivation in first submitting to Lope and later returning to him, but can by no means claim certainty about this; or even to say that things in it—her affair, and the whole character of the painter—are not cursory in their development. The painter isn't an important character; he is little more than Tristana's vehicle for attempting to assert her freedom from Lope; but this will not excuse the fact of the sequences with him being so flat and uninteresting (to be sure, Buñuel was saddled here with an actor he didn't want). But the overall meaning and momentum of the film seem to me unmistakable: Lope's violation of Tristana's innocence has both robbed her of her "superstitions" and unsatisfyingly aroused her. His obsession is a claim on her freedom which she resists, a cage in which she can never be happy, but also a passion which she recognizes as stronger than any other that attempts to exert a claim on her. The "devil," or at least a satyr, has interposed himself between her and the sound of her church bells, though the act proves as destructive to him as to her. And Lope, however he sinks deeper into the ways of respectability, can never possess her. I think it is not simply because of the fineness of Fernando Rey's performance as Lope that his character seems to stand at the center of this film named for Tristana; that his pathos is the most deeply felt element of the film, and his degradation the more profoundly disturbing. With almost no emphasis on the director's part, the scene of Lope's cozy fraternization with the priests who have entered the blasphemer's house at last (though by how devious a route they can never know) is a truly horrifying culmination of Lope's obsession. It is Buñuel's witness to the power of the irrational maelstrom over the principles of any "philosophy."

YET the problem with *Tristana*, and it is a problem which has dogged Buñuel's last three films, is that here is a film about obsession without any sense of obsession, a work about sexual passion without sensuality; one in which all the thematic elements are masterfully under control but something intangibly beyond this is missing. What these late films lack is any real surrender to their eroticism. *Tristana* is, in fact, a project which Buñuel had wanted to film for many years, which may account in part for its being so much more compelling a work than *Belle de Jour* or *The Milky Way*, but perhaps there are grounds for believing that Buñuel, who since *Belle de Jour* has been saying that he no longer has any desire to make films (but who has apparently been persuaded to continue by the fact of his lately having achieved a new position of creative independence), is to be taken at his word. In the past, Buñuel has been probably the most illuminating commentator on his own work of all major filmmakers; it may be that he remains so.

ARTISTS, even great artists, age differently with respect to the practice of their art. The passion of a Yeats may increase with age even as that of an Eliot declines. Buñuel's art at its height is distinguished, I believe, by a passion as fierce as any we have seen in films; by a rage to discover the world as it is, and to question if it is as it should be. Such passion might be sustained in an artist's late work; it is sustained, I think, in a work as late as *The Diary of a Chambermaid*, made when Buñuel was sixty-three, and, though in a much different vein, arguably even in *Simon of the Desert* of two years later. In February, Buñuel was seventy-one years old, his life spanning that of this century, and, if a certain dryness and brittleness, even a certain lack of involvement, has entered his work, I hardly feel myself capable of reproaching him for failing to recreate a richness and intensity as overwhelming as that of *L'Age d'Or* or *Viridiana*. It may be that Buñuel will make great films again; it may be that he will make no others. In any case, *Tristana* remains, despite the partisans of either persuasion, a testament to his continuing mastery and to the difficult fact that even great artists in their maturity can create works which may, in some essential ways, fail.

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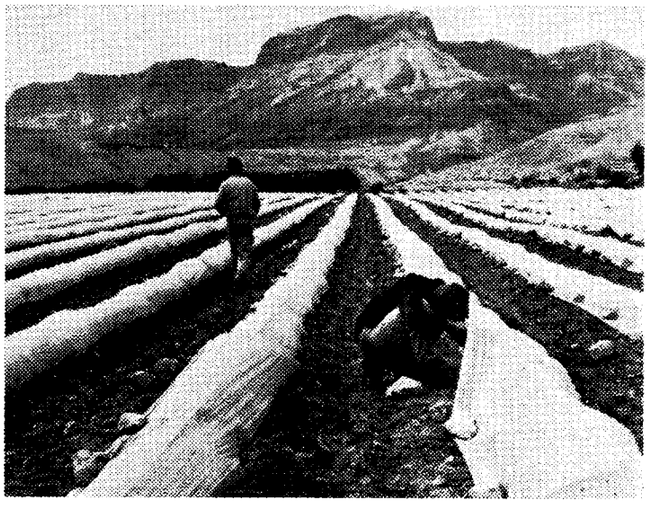

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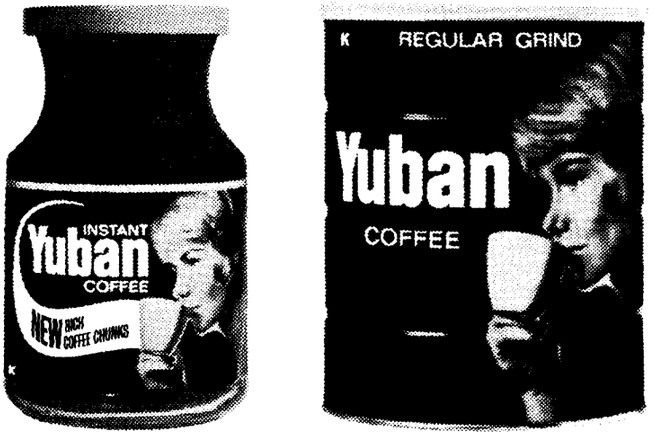

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The Moralist

CRIME IN AMERICA. By RAMSEY CLARK. *Simon and Schuster. 436 pp. $6.95.*

Reviewed by JAMES Q. WILSON

ONE OF THE major political and intellectual problems of the 1960's was to find and defend a constructive, responsible position on the issue of predatory crime, a position that recognized the gravity of the problem without feeding the hysteria about it and that offered approaches which avoided either the shrill demands of the far Right for the impeachment of Supreme Court justices or the blind self-destructiveness of the far Left in its opposition to any anti-crime measure because it would be "anti-black" or "anti-young."

Ramsey Clark, one might have supposed, was ideally suited for that difficult task. A soft-spoken Texan, thoughtful and liberal, with six years of experience in the Justice Department before President Johnson made him Attorney General, Clark managed on many occasions to reveal a capacity for fairness combined with determination that was reassuring to those confused or angered by the excessively ideological nature of the public clamor about crime. Clark created the federal strike forces against organized crime, but he also stimulated a renewed effort to make the Federal Bureau of Prisons more rehabilitative. He also coordinated the security measures at the October 1967 peace march on the Pentagon with the result that there were a minimum of incidents.

His new book on crime certainly makes an effort to strike the same balance, but in this case in vain. It is an inadequate book. There is no other way to put it. As a serious analysis of crime and the ways to cope with it, it is a failure. As a statement of personal moral and political conviction, it conveys a message that will reassure those who wish to avoid coming to grips with the crime problem and will disappoint those who wish to think seriously about it.

The mistake, I think, was to write the book in the first place. The problem of crime is such that careful analysis, precision of thought, accuracy of facts, and grappling with problems of feasibility are essential. Anything less will perpetuate errors, feed preconceptions, or offer illusory hopes. But an active political figure, one mentioned as a Presidential dark horse, and a man who has already begun to attract a coterie of dedicated and articulate followers, cannot write a serious book. He does not have the time or (usually) the skills. A political man inevitably writes a political book.

A political book can, of course, have merit. If it captures the public imagination, unites formerly divided groups, or defines the leading ideas of the time, it can be as useful as any other political symbol; and today there is little doubt that unifying symbols and thoughts are very much needed. Judged by this test, *Crime in America* may have a limited success, but only a limited one. Picking a public fight with J. Edgar Hoover not only makes it harder to secure Clark's objective of Mr. Hoover's resignation, it also puts Mr. Clark on the losing end of a popularity contest. Thus the book will be seen as not even political in the best sense, but as partisan.

Taking the book for what it claims to be—observations on the nature, causes, prevention, and control of crime, to paraphrase its subtitle—the overall impression is of a volume in which the tone is consistent but the details inconsistent. The tone can perhaps be summarized as follows: There are many kinds of crime, of which street crime is not the most important, and they can only be dealt with by refusing to tolerate injustice. This requires getting tough on white-collar crime and other forms of exploitation but avoiding repression when dealing with ghetto crime. Only massive efforts to eliminate poverty and racism combined with reforms designed to make the criminal-justice system fairer are appropriate responses to the latter.

MANY READERS will disagree with this summary of Mr. Clark's views, including perhaps Mr. Clark himself. Many will point to specific observations or recommendations that are at variance with this summary. And that precisely is the problem—the book contains individual sentences supportive of a wide range of mutually inconsistent positions. The first half of Chapter 3, for example, criticizes crime statistics sharply, observing that "we know little, we misconceive much." The second half of the chapter is an analysis of crime based on the (presumably) discredited statistics. We are told on page 147 that we should require college training for the police as part of an effort to professionalize them; we are told on page 159 that minority-group members must be enlisted in the police in great numbers; but we are not told on any page how we deal with the fact that higher educational requirements will reduce minority-group enlistments.

Major urban areas need a "single police service," we are told on page 132, but seven pages before we were told that "participatory democracy" and "community control" of the police (as well as other local services) are important. Now, in practice one can imagine

JAMES Q. WILSON, *professor of government at Harvard, contributed "Crime & the Liberal Audience" to our January number.*

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various ways of combining the provision of certain police services on a metropolitan-wide basis with neighborhood or community control of other police services. But there is no suggestion in the book of how or even whether this should be done, leaving the reader to decide for himself if he likes the concept of a metropolitan police or prefers it to a neighborhood police.

Even the question of whether street or violent crime is important enough to worry about is left unclear. On this subject, what Mr. Clark does with crime statistics is at least as indefensible as what his rival, Mr. Hoover, has done. On page 49 we are told that since only one person in 400 was the victim of a crime of violence in 1967, the average individual's chance of being a victim was "once in 400 years." If one assumes that only half of all violent crimes are reported, then the individual's chances are "once in 200 years." The implication is clear—what are we so excited about?

One thing we should be excited about is the misrepresentation embodied in these figures. If the average person has each year a one-in-200 chance of being a victim, then his lifetime chances of being a victim are the sum of these annual probabilities over his life expectancy. If the average man lives seventy years, then his chances of being a victim of a violent crime at some time are seven in twenty, or about one in three, not one in 200. And for black females, where the estimated rate of victimization by violent crime is 8.5 per 1,000 population, or about one in 120, the lifetime chances are better than one in two.

MR. CLARK ends his book with an epilogue entitled "A Passion for Justice." And many of the passions he expresses are worthwhile —his deep concern over the failure of the American correctional system, his disgust at lawmakers who think that crime bills should chiefly provide money for the police to buy more hardware, his opposition to the misleading view that Supreme Court decisions have caused much of the increase in crime, his criticism of the incompetence of the National Guard, his rejection of the "outside-agitator" theory of the ghetto riots of 1965-67, and his skepticism toward the utility of the death penalty. But the passion that one looks for and does not find is a passion that evinces some sense of the horror of being a ghetto resident whose apartment is burglarized weekly, whose wife cannot walk home alone and unafraid from the supermarket, and whose neighborhood is devastated by heroin addicts living and stealing in the streets. Mr. Clark appreciates the plight of those victimized by poverty and segregation, but he does not seem to appreciate the extent to which those same people are unwilling to defer dealing with crime until various (unspecified) measures designed to reduce poverty and eliminate segregation take effect.

Mr. Clark's treatment of narcotics is symptomatic of this perspective. While the chapter is hard to summarize because it says many different things, it leaves the reader with the impression that heroin addiction is a socially less important problem than youthful experimentation with newer synthetic drugs such as "speed." More of the chapter is devoted to an argument for legalizing marijuana than to a discussion of alternative ways to handle heroin. I agree with Mr. Clark's view that "Operation Intercept," the Nixon administration's effort to stop the flow of marijuana across the Mexican border, was probably pointless and certainly a diversion of resources from more important drug problems. What I find hard to understand, however, is his dismissal of any comparable effort to shut off the flow of heroin into the United States or his easy (and unwarranted) assertion that reducing the supply of one drug will lead to increased use of another. If, as he says, marijuana users cut off from their supplies will turn to heroin (I am not sure that is true), then all the more reason for either reducing the supply of heroin or treating marijuana as a drug with harmful effects.

Even more distressing are Mr. Clark's confident assertions that since drug addiction is an illness, "medical science can discover cures and provide care" or later that "we know that corrections can rehabilitate." Now, in fact, we do not know either of these things. We hope medical science can solve the drug problem, and experiments with methadone are encouraging (though not for all addicts), but no one knows enough yet to be confident of anything. There have been a few promising correctional experiments, and I fully share Mr. Clark's view that corrections is the most neglected though the most fruitful area for social intervention in dealing with the criminal, but I have to say that I do not know whether in any large numbers and for most criminals, corrections can rehabilitate. I wish I did know.

IF THIS BOOK is essentially a call to arms, a demand for public concern, then some would say my niggling reservations are out of place. Perhaps. If the book succeeds in mobilizing public concern about our criminal-justice system, I will regret and publicly apologize for every unkind thing I have written here. But I suspect that this is not the effect the book will have, and I must say that many of those who thus far have waxed enthusiastic over it have hardly expressed much concern in the past for criminal justice.

What the book really is saying—and why I believe that reservations, exceptions, and rejoinders are in order—is that all we need to solve the problem of crime is will power and money. That is certainly what Tom Wicker of the New York *Times* thinks the book says. He describes, in a hyperbolic introduction, Ramsey Clark's as "the most revolutionary voice in America today." *Revolutionary*? A man who is in essence recommending the anti-crime program of Lyndon B. Johnson?

The reason Wicker finds Clark revolutionary is that, as Clark keeps saying, "it is all a matter of will." But it is not. The decade of the 1960's should have borne witness to the bankruptcy of that idea. Almost every plan for dealing with poverty and discrimination and unemployment anyone

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could think of was tried, and yet little happened, or rather little that was intended happened. The culture of poverty and the culture of crime (they overlap substantially but not, as some think, entirely) have proved distressingly resistant to most of our favorite ideas—especially to the injection of money, whether in the form of public-housing projects, urban renewal, aid to families of dependent children, community-action programs, model cities, or anti-crime plans. It was under Attorney General Clark that we first began to spend federal money in earnest on law enforcement, and it would be a brave man who could say that the extra money did much more than buy us more of the same. More accurately, it would be a foolhardy man who claimed to know what, if anything, we bought at all. The consequences of the expenditure of money on law enforcement are not known, and no administration, Republican or Democratic, has made a serious effort to find out.

Putting the problem of crime (or of poverty) as simply a matter of "will" perpetuates the erroneous view that these are issues to be settled by ideological formulations, not by practical experimentation with some reasonable effort to assess the results of those experiments. For if it is only a question of will, then it is hard to argue with those who say that the "will" required is one that will curb crime by ending the "permissiveness" and "moral bankruptcy" of our society. If we are to deal with crime at all responsibly, we must try to avoid blaming our present state of affairs on ethical failings. If the issue is moralized, then I suspect that it will be Mr. Agnew, not Mr. Clark, who will be most successful in placing the blame.

BUT IT IS, of course, precisely this moral tone of Mr. Clark's book, rather than any of its concrete recommendations, that explains its success. The broadest themes of the book are adumbrated in its first sentence—"Crime reflects the character of a people." That character, we are told, has been formed—or rather misformed

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JUDAISM quarterly is published by the American Jewish Congress
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—by the nature of a technologically complex mass society. We are dehumanized by technology and population, with family breakdown, individual anonymity, and the floundering of old ideals the result. The young are especially victimized by this process and rightly critical of it; they are "powerless" in the face of "unreachable and unresponsive" institutions. To deal with this, we must "distribute power" and involve students in decisions that affect them. Until this happens, "we will have mass demonstrations with their potential for violence." But we should not worry too much about that potential, because for all the damage done, "youth achieved more change for the better" in the 1960's than has been achieved heretofore in this century. In any case, "no university will be destroyed by student violence."

We have read all that before. Theodore Roszak summarizes the entire argument in the subtitle to his book, *The Making of a Counter Culture*—"reflections on the technocratic society and its youthful opposition." But there is a difference: Roszak rejects the view that the technocracy can solve the problems its existence has created, while Clark believes technology can be our salvation: "There is no greater evidence of the total neglect of the criminal justice system than our failure to apply science to the solution of crime."

There is little point in asking such obvious questions as how can technology change the character of a people, or by what means are we to reconcile distributing power to satisfy those eager to have it while at the same time centralizing it enough to permit the needed changes in our police, courts, and correctional institutions to go forward? Little point, because "will" and a passion for justice are more important than intellectual clarity or practical feasibility. And judging from the success of Mr. Clark's book, perhaps in one sense he is right: in an era in which virtue is taken to mean having "authentic" and apocalyptic feelings, perhaps it is inevitable that any appeal to the citizenry will above all seek to reassure them that they are right to feel a deep sense of outrage at "the system." Only if the problems can be described as insoluble can one hope, it would seem, to make anyone believe that new efforts toward solution should be undertaken.

Clark's book is a minor and impermanent example of the current debasement of public discourse. If there is any tragedy here, it is that he failed to take the opportunity to give a careful and sober account of his modest but constructive accomplishments while Attorney General, accomplishments for which he can rightly claim credit. Such a book would not have sold many copies, but it would have revealed far more accurately than *Crime in America* how one deals seriously with the complex and obstinate reality of our criminal-justice system.

The School Problem

CRISIS IN THE CLASSROOM: THE REMAKING OF AMERICAN EDUCATION. By CHARLES E. SILBERMAN. *Random House. 553 pp. $10.00.*

Reviewed by SAMUEL MCCRACKEN

CHARLES E. SILBERMAN's big book has been received with pretty general cries of hosanna. For a number of reasons—its prestige as "the $300,000 Carnegie study," its serialization in the *Atlantic* under the febrile rubric "Murder in the Classroom," and its even more perfervid pre-publication publicity ("Genocide in Our Schools")—it is likely to be influential. Despite Silberman's own reservations about John Holt and other "romantic" (as he calls them) critics of the schools, such critics are already citing his work as an Establishment diagnosis requiring their own radical nostrums. And, on the other side, Albert Shanker of the United Federation of Teachers has endorsed Silberman's main recommendation in a generally sympathetic review of the book.

The Carnegie study began as a look into the education of teachers, but Silberman early became convinced that the eventual environment of a practicing teacher was crucial to his preparation, and turned to an examination of the schools in general. The *raison d'être* of the study thus winds up as a sort of coda placed at the end of the more general survey.

While the account of the way we make teachers does not add a great deal—beyond updating current experimentation—to the work of such distinguished *voces clamantes in deserto* as Albert Lynd, James D. Koerner, and James B. Conant, its wide currency is certainly going to let a little more light in under all those flat rocks covering the schools of education: by gnashing his teeth and rending his garments in a larger marketplace, Silberman may end up lamenting to greater effect.

But considering the putative depth and breadth of Silberman's research, there are some curious omissions in the report. He barely alludes to what has been a promising development in the training of teachers, the rise of the essentially non-educationist Master of Arts in Teaching programs, whereby a number of colleges and universities have offered students with strong liberal-arts degrees the chance to perfect disciplinary competence while gaining teacher's certification through education courses entirely different from the idiocies which so often keep the brightest undergraduates from minoring in education. The life and hard times of these programs, which have been salvaging some very good teachers from the pool of prospects initially driven away by the normal education offerings, are most pointedly relevant to Silberman's entirely correct claim that the arts faculties have shamefully neglected the education of teachers. That he should have nothing to say about a major attempt to remedy what he identifies as a major problem is surely puzzling, and raises serious doubts about the thoroughness of his survey.

Crisis in the Classroom begins with a motif which runs throughout the work, one which has attracted a

SAMUEL MCCRACKEN *teaches literature and the humanities at Reed College in Oregon. Mr. McCracken's article, "Quackery in the Classroom," appeared in our June 1970 number.*

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good deal of attention: a revival of the Deweyan notion of educating the whole child, of teaching him to feel as well as to think; in sum, of education as moral education. Silberman, dissenting from Robert Hutchins's definition of a human being as one who thinks, cites in evidence the now somewhat threadbare example of the German universities under Hitler. These institutions, he argues, show that something more than thought is needed to be human. Such a formulation profoundly mistakes the relation of head to heart in National Socialist dogma, the besetting sin of which was hardly a tendency to be frigidly intellectual. The fashionable anti-intellectual intellectual poses which Silberman rightly rejects as "sentimental foolishness" find their echo in Hitlerian injunctions like "Think with your blood" and in the educational theory of National Socialist educational bureaucrats like Hans Schemm:

> The goal of our education is the formation of character. We don't intend to educate our children into becoming miniature scholars. . . . Until now we have transmitted to them too much knowledge and too little of human nature.

We come up, then, against the inevitable question in any discussion of moral education: Whose morality?

If one assumes (as I take it Silberman does) that for the indefinite future education will continue to be modally public education, then the desire for moral education collides with the most elementary notions of democratic pluralism. Much as *A* may know the moral instruction he wants for his children, *B* in the same school district, no matter how enlightened *A*'s views, will be certain that *A*'s morality is a program for perdition. Unless one wishes to drive *A* or *B* or both into private schools, it seems there is considerable reason to leave moral education in the home.

WITH MUCH of Silberman's carefully specified list of defects in the schools, it is very difficult to disagree. Schools do indeed more often than not consider order as no more

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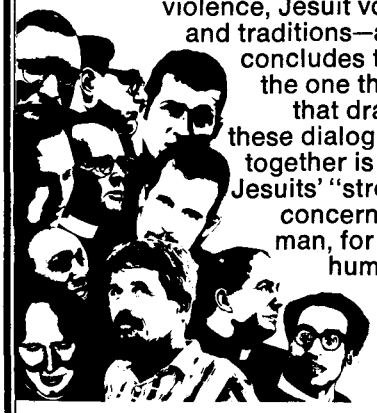

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than lack of sound and motion, and regard this sort of order as a precondition for learning. The schools in fact trample on the most basic rights of students, and I must agree with Silberman that the sooner the whole humiliating and squalid nonsense of dress codes and rest-room passes can be swept away, the better. (He is distinguishable from the "romantics" by his willingness to believe that some of these practices are symptomatic rather than causal: that rest-room passes may be understandable in a school where the rest-rooms serve as depots for heroin.)

Silberman also presents a good deal of evidence that press releases crammed with fashionable rhetoric about personal freedom and critical intellect can be typed out by the dead hand of the bureaucracy; in this regard, his horrible examples are especially effective. But his critique of recent reform movements is less satisfactory. His fifth chapter, "The Failures of Educational Reform," would carry more conviction under the title "The Failure of Educational Reforms to Be Panaceas." He views everything which has been tried in the name of reform simply as having severally and singly failed to solve all problems; in doing so, he largely fails to distinguish the failure of educational gimmickry to do much of anything (a good deal of educational television, for example) from the qualitatively different failure of such substantive developments as the curriculum-reform movement to do everything. One can concede that the learning environment is crucial, that the schools very often furnish an environment positively hostile, and still believe that improved environments are compatible with the sort of advanced curriculum exemplified in the PSSC physics series. An absolute inability or unwillingness to separate issues of curriculum and environment easily leads the "romantics" to conclude that all learning is equally desirable. Silberman is aware of the fallacy of this notion, but his uniformly Jeremian view of the curricular reform movement may be misread as a call to throw out the curricular baby with the bathwater.

About the promise of technology in education, he is properly skeptical. But he relies heavily on Anthony Oettinger's sardonic and stimulating *Run, Computer, Run,* too much preferring Oettinger the corrective pessimist to Oettinger the qualified optimist. While it is right to say that at present a computer which could comprehend everything a student might say to it lies well beyond the frontiers of linguistic and computer science, it is also true that computers do exist that are able to respond to restricted versions of English. (Reed College's IBM 1130 has learned, under the tutoring of one of my students, to tell an interlocutor that *dog bite mans* is ungrammatical, while *I had frozen meat* is grammatical but syntactically ambiguous.) The possiblity that such a technology can be refined for certain limited instructional purposes probably is well this side of the frontier.

Having displayed all the inherent limitations of Computer Assisted Instruction, arguing that it is nonsense to believe that we are near being able to supply each student with a cybernon who will teach as well as Aristotle, Silberman then contends that even such tasks as can be performed by computers will be so performed at a cost perhaps ten times that of teachers. Well, perhaps. C. Victor Bunderson at the University of Texas has recently published a paper describing a CAI basic mathematics course using available hardware at a cost very substantially lower than traditional methods. Bunderson's figures hardly in themselves disprove Silberman's; but there is no sign that Silberman is aware of them, or of the real possibility that the state of the art may be advancing fast enough to render prediction a risky enterprise.

HIS CRITIQUE of past reforms complete, Silberman turns to his own proposals. For the reshaping of elementary education, he offers a clear model: the "informal" schools of the United Kingdom. On the evidence, the model is an attractive one. As Silberman points out, the informal schools retain a good deal of structure, and are thus an alternative to the unskeletal experience offered by a great many "free"

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schools. What the informal schools get rid of is the assembly-line format which characterizes elementary education in this country. Since there seems to be agreement from quarters as diverse as historical practice and Paul Goodman that elementary and secondary education ought to be handled rather differently, the availability of a scheme which appears to work in another industrial country ought to lead to the widest experimentation here.

For secondary education, there is no equivalent model, there being thus far no radical environments containing anything like a traditional understanding of curriculum. Silberman cites the Parkway School (which appears to me to suffer at least in theory from the notion that whatever is worth studying can be found in Philadelphia, and in practice from its requisite urban setting), the Murray Road Annex of the Newton schools (which is committed to something like the conventional curriculum *plus*; the writing from its students is most impressive), and finally, the John Adams High School of Portland, Oregon.

ADAMS was apparently in its first weeks of operation when Silberman completed his account, and as he points out, much of what he says is based on its promise rather than its performance. Because Adams is attempting to grapple with high-school reform squarely within the system, its clear success would have the most profound implications for the rest of the country. Random jottings from a visit to Adams assure one that the promise is there. One observes that it is possible to remove the customary constraints on student movement and not generate chaos within the hallways. About the Adams General Education program it is a good deal less easy to be sure. Students participating in lively guerrilla theater on the topic of American culture are clearly enjoying themselves, but whether such experiences are a substitute for close analysis will be demonstrable only after the gathering of the evidence of several years' practice. One does not guess from the relaxed atmosphere that the school has just weathered a potentially explosive racial crisis. One learns that the principal has recently effected a *coup d'état* by memorandum, in which he has been forced to point out that a careful respect for student and faculty rights does not mean that the power in a high school ultimately lies anywhere else than in the principal's office. Withal, one comes away still convinced of the promise, still unsure of the performance.

Crisis in the Classroom deserves much of its reputation: it does contain a great deal of striking report, and of recent critics of the school Silberman is among the more judicious. But the book is not the massively complete statement some of its supporters have made of it. And —in common with most critiques— it is longer on diagnosis than on prescription. Although it will probably provide underpinning for disparate and indeed conflicting schools of reform (some of them distinctly unhelpful), its possible misuse will render it no less useful to the discerning reader.

Partisan View

MARK TWAIN: AN AMERICAN PROPHET. By MAXWELL GEISMAR. *Houghton Mifflin. 574 pp. $10.00.*

Reviewed by PETER SHAW

THE MARK TWAIN controversy is a dispute about America. Van Wyck Brooks, in *The Ordeal of Mark Twain* (1920), was the first to suggest that the crudity and shallowness of American society— first on the Missouri frontier of Twain's youth and in the genteel East where he lived his adult life— kept Twain from achieving his full artistic maturity. Starting with Bernard de Voto, whose *Mark Twain's America* (1932) was the first challenge to Brooks, the opponents of this thesis have tended not to argue that Mark Twain's achievement was higher than Brooks claimed, but rather that

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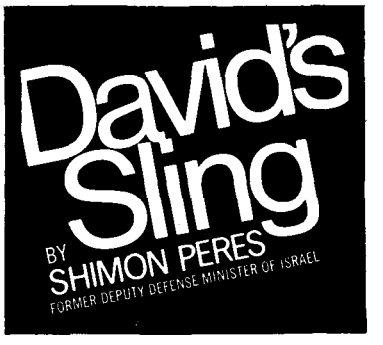

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Brooks failed to appreciate the virtues of 19th-century American culture. As is now well-known, these critics have ended by coming over pretty much to Brooks's view (de Voto after editing the late works of Twain's decline) while Brooks, as he developed into a celebrator of the American 19th century, went over to the opposition. Maxwell Geismar continues the tradition of focusing on Mark Twain's America, but he is the first party to the controversy to state unequivocally that, far from showing a decline, Twain's "late work far surpassed his earlier in knowledge and insight, in its range and complexity of artistic vision."

WHEN he was sixty-one, Mark Twain suffered personal tragedy: he went bankrupt, his wife's chronic invalidism grew worse, and his favorite daughter died. Twain recovered slowly from his personal grief and, becoming rich again, doggedly paid off his creditors; but, as even his greatest admirers have had to admit, he never experienced a true "rebirth" of his creative powers. Geismar's claim that Twain went on to become an even greater writer than he had been before his reversals would hardly merit serious attention were it not accompanied by his additional charge that Mark Twain's later greatness has not simply been overlooked, but has been systematically suppressed by "Cold War critics." Geismar argues, or rather proclaims, that because Twain was "a natural (and unconscious) Marxist in part of his thinking," he threatens the 1950's-like conformity and complacency of these critics who either deny or ignore Twain's espousal of revolutionary violence, his "repudiation of . . . white Anglo-Saxon culture," his exposures of "the genocide on which American culture rested," and his general insight into the "American racist culture." The Russians, however, are "accurate" in their charge that Americans know only a Mark Twain censored of his social and political observations, especially his attacks on American capitalism. It must be understood that Geismar is making an ideological point here, so that it would be a mere quibble to point out that the documents to which he refers all appear in the numerous collected editions of Mark Twain, or that they were specifically brought together in 1962 in a volume called *Mark Twain on the Damned Human Race,* with a foreword by . . . Maxwell Geismar.

If Geismar's glaring contradictions are worth attention, therefore, it is only as examples of how a literary critic may go about the appropriation of the fashionable leftism of the day. Himself a figure of the 30's, Geismar has seen fit to revive the vulgar Marxism of that period, only bringing it up to date by dressing it in the stylish garb of youth-worship, Reichian sexual license, Third World polemics, and, at last, the inevitable equation of the United States with Hitler Germany.

GEISMAR CALLS "nonsense" the view that *Huckleberry Finn* was Mark Twain's one masterpiece since "his whole career was a classic." Most readers would agree that there are brilliant passages throughout Twain's writings, but they would nevertheless have to notice much that is unfortunate. From his first major book, *The Innocents Abroad,* "as in almost all Twain's work from start to last, the quality is uneven" because of "padded material" and "dragging and belabored narrative." The first volume of *The Gilded Age,* a collaboration, is "poor as literature and disappointing as a historical document." *Sketches New and Old* has "many . . . sections of trivia; casual, hasty little familiar essays." Even *Tom Sawyer* "hinge[s] upon a ridiculous melodrama" and suffers from Twain's "uneasiness" about handling sex. *A Tramp Abroad,* with its "sluggish prose" is an "ordeal" to read, while *The Prince and the Pauper,* with its "execrable language" and its "affected" central character, amounts to so much "silly stuff"—"contrived and inadequate." The second volume of *Life on the Mississippi,* a better book, is "an inferior travelogue." *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* has both a "confused structure" and "improbable characters."

Beginning in the 90's, these weaknesses become even more

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common. In *Pudd'nhead Wilson,* the "literary execution" of Roxy, the heroine, "is uneven and sometimes quite false." It is to be remarked that Twain "did not create an effective heroine in the whole body of his work." Later, "it is difficult to find *anything* of interest in *Joan of Arc*—except its badness." The sequels to *Tom Sawyer* "cause one only to wonder how Clemens could so openly exploit his famous earlier book while debasing the original characters and concepts."

If these judgments appear too harsh or exaggerated that is because the tone in which they are expressed carries Maxwell Geismar's harsh assertiveness: all of the quotations in the previous two paragraphs are his. Were Geismar not so insistent on branding any criticism of Mark Twain as part of the "Cold War" critics "fashionable and herdlike theory," one might have tried to suggest that, like Bernard de Voto and others who over the years have challenged *The Ordeal of Mark Twain,* he inevitably fell into the Brooksian orbit. But Geismar exempts himself from any such generosity; as fast as he piles up refutations of his own thesis, he pours out anathemas on all who disagree with him. Van Wyck Brooks gets off fairly easily. He "did not understand Twain's humor" and, unlike Geismar, "falsely used this great artist" to prove a thesis. Others—Edmund Wilson, Lionel Trilling, F. R. Leavis, Irving Howe, Leon Edel, to give a partial list—are either "prurient Freudians," aesthetes, or "Cold War" ideologues. The remarks on Lionel Trilling are particularly ill-taken since Geismar owes a debt to Trilling's pioneering analysis of *Huckleberry Finn.* Charles Neider, Geismar reveals, omitted certain sections from his edition of Twain's *Autobiography* not "on grounds of 'taste' or 'esthetics,' as Neider claimed" (nor because they were already available in other editions and would have made his too long), "but really because of the prevailing Cold War theology in the American fifties whose narrow values many critics accepted so blandly, so smugly, so piously. And still do."

Geismar's political assault rests on his contention that Mark Twain's writings from 1897 until his death in 1910 not only constituted his great period, but are characterized by a critique of America that stemmed from the fact that Twain "alone among American writers . . . had discovered the true nature of modern imperialism." Geismar's own strictures on the works of this period, however, are more severe than those of any of its denigrators. *The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg* is an "indistinguished lot" of "poor fiction," and the title story is itself "uneven in craft, rough in detail." *A Double-Barreled Detective Story* is "a heavy-footed parody"; *The $30,000 Bequest and Other Stories* contains "too many trivial and minor tales for padding"; the "tedious" and "boring" *What Is Man?* is "not only tangential . . . but self-contradictory"; *Christian Science* is "uneven"; *A Horse's Tale,* with its "sadistic ending," is "cruel and hard." And so on.

Geismar makes similar comments about the two works of this period that he holds up for praise: *The Mysterious Stranger* and Twain's *Autobiography,* both of which have had their champions, contrary to what he suggests. But more important, what he values in these books is not so much their social or political content as that purely imaginative aesthetic he so despises when "Cold War critics" talk about it. Unfortunately for even this unwitting capitulation, the excellent passages Geismar likes best in the *Autobiography* were written in the 1870's, while the unfinished condition of *The Mysterious Stranger,* even if Geismar were right to praise its adolescent nihilism, remains a sad testimony to Twain's confusion near the end.

Of course Geismar disdainfully and in italics dismisses both "the academic controversy over the various editions" of *The Mysterious Stranger* and the textual problems of the *Autobiography.* The fact is, however, that he has chosen two works where these matters are crucial. He fulminates against editors who have "suppressed" parts of Twain's *Autobiography,* twitting them for their elitist notions of form: "One must understand and accept" Twain's "lack of form . . .

How the advent of "academic capitalism" has undermined the ideal of our universities

In one of the most momentous and sure to be controversial indictments of academia, Robert Nisbet accuses American universities of having betrayed themselves. No longer are they committed to the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake. And no longer can they command respect for this commitment. With the close of World War II, university gates have been opened to "academic entrepreneurs"—professors engaged in what Professor Nisbet calls "higher capitalism"—the practice of selling knowledge to the highest bidder, usually government or big business. The result—the university has come to both undermine its authority and repudiate its ideals. In a brilliant conclusion to this problem Professor Nisbet offers a lucid and pragmatic program of reforms that must be attempted if the university is to be reinstated to a prominent and productive position.

The Degradation of the Academic Dogma

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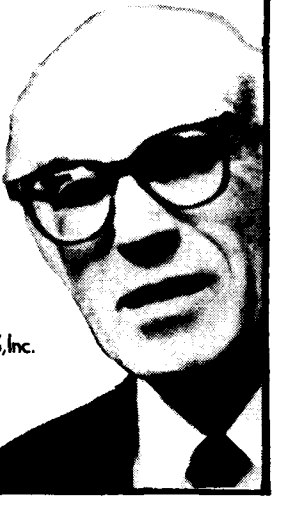

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in order to grasp the secret of his greatness." Charles Neider, ignorant of this principle, has left out certain portions of the *Autobiography*: "And very likely this was done at the cost of some of Twain's best passages of writing." But just a moment. If it is "very likely" that Neider has omitted passages, if Geismar is not certain whether or not he has, then Geismar has not seen all of Mark Twain's *Autobiography*. He insists that this is a neglected and bowdlerized masterpiece, that its formless form has been misunderstood, and that it must be printed exactly as Twain wrote it to be appreciated, yet he has never read the work he praises.

More accurately, what he has not studied is the jumble of manuscripts which Mark Twain wrote and dictated over a period of nearly forty years. Including reminiscences, essays, letters, journal entries, and other odds and ends, all the sheets that Mark Twain designated to be included in his *Autobiography* would add up to an utterly unwieldy and unreadable book, as the scholars and editors have patiently explained. One may argue about the different principles of selection used by the three editors who have done editions of the "autobiography." But to talk of suppression, even in the service of a faltering thesis like Geismar's, is absurd. Once again Geismar himself provides the evidence against his own claims, for he eventually admits that the *Autobiography* is "tedious" and "repetitious," and that Neider was right to put the disordered manuscripts into a chronological order, formless form notwithstanding.

IT WOULD BE superfluous to document how Geismar also undermines his own case against the despair which characterizes Twain's late works, how he provides the sort of Freudian interpretations of Twain's books as projections of his life that he complains of in critics like Justin Kaplan (in fact neither Van Wyck Brooks nor Justin Kaplan has a Freudian *thesis*, though both avail themselves of psychological insights), how he shows Twain to have been a self-censoring Victorian about sex (despite his claim that Twain showed in his works a pagan love of the flesh), or, finally, how he reveals that his "enraged radical" lived in plutocratic luxury, hobnobbing with the head of Standard Oil, and spurning first the Haymarket rioters and then Maxim Gorky when he came to America in 1906 to raise money for the Russian revolutionary movement. (Twain was, you see, a "spy in the house of the oligarchy.")

But Geismar's accusing tone in praising Twain's social criticism in essays like "King Leopold's Soliloquy," "A War Prayer," and "The United States of Lyncherdom" is pure comedy worthy of Mark Twain himself. For Geismar neglects to mention that Twain acquiesced in his publisher's reluctance to print these works; he accepted the suggestion that he donate the first to be printed as a pamphlet by the Boston Congo Reform Association while he suppressed the other two—the last lest it hurt his sales in the South.* In view of these facts, Geismar's hilarious comment on "The United States of Lyncherdom"—"who knows, if Paine had not published it in 1923, and if, still later, it had fallen into the hands of the Cold War critics of the 1950's, it would still remain unpublished"—deserves a special place in the literary history of our times.

GEISMAR'S obsessive irrationality suggests how potent the anti-American emotion has grown in the space of a few years. For notice that any ordinary resentment against the society would be satisfied by Brooks's thesis that Mark Twain's failure was the consequence of his being an American. But Geismar is concerned to indict *political* America as well as American society, though he seems not quite aware of the distinction between the two. To do so he employs the myth of an "Old Republic" with democratic revolutionary values (though based on genocide) under which Mark Twain grew up and was nurtured, and a "Modern American Empire" (also engaged in genocide) against which Twain presciently rebelled. (That Twain in the Republic period repudiated American democracy in general and universal suffrage in particular even as he worshiped the English class system, which Geismar does not mention, or that he approved the Spanish American War in the Empire period, which Geismar does note, need hardly give us pause. Any such deviations are simply "very un-Twainish Twain.")

THE SPIRIT of fury against the nation combined with assertive praise of what it once is supposed to have been marks a resurgence of the self-righteous strain in native radicalism. Mark Twain hated America, it is proclaimed, and that damning truth has been kept from us; but Mark Twain was a red-blooded American, like Maxwell Geismar an old-fashioned American democrat of the sort that Jamesian aesthetes fear and cannot understand (the book jacket of *Mark Twain: An American Prophet* appropriately features a slanted red, white, and blue stripe with stars across its face containing the last three words of the title). This foisting of partisan politics on the past is what is known as making history "relevant." The historical revisionists having invented an American imperium responsible for the major ills of the 20th century, literary revisionists may now add that certain writers always knew the terrible truth, that their revelations have been shamefully obscured by literary helots, and that the only true patriots are those who have the courage to proclaim the great anti-American tradition in American letters.

Yet despite Geismar's effort to misread him, Mark Twain's rise to greatness, fortune, and then tragedy with the fulfillment of his dream remains a classic American example. Not quite destroyed by the society, as Brooks at first had it, nor yet its unambiguous champion, as de Voto for a time believed, Mark Twain embodied and sometimes made into art that ambiguity toward the mother country that many of us feel and a few allow to degenerate into blind hatred.

* This information comes from a book Geismar understandably abhors, Justin Kaplan's splendid *Mr. Clemens and Mark Twain*.

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Christian Anti-Semitism

GOD'S FIRST LOVE: CHRISTIANS AND JEWS OVER TWO THOUSAND YEARS. By FRIEDRICH HEER. Translated by GEOFFREY SKELTON. *Weybright and Talley. 530 pp. $15.00.*

Reviewed by A. ROY ECKARDT

OBSCURITY OF AIM and a somewhat vexing discursiveness combine with other literary lapses—surplus detail, a tendency to proof-by-quotation, excessive citation—to render difficult an objective assessment of this work by Friedrich Heer, a Catholic who teaches the history of ideas at the University of Vienna. The title (in German as in English) helps little; a student of mine calls it condescending. Young men know that first loves are usually outgrown. Although Professor Heer attests that the divine covenant with Israel is everlasting, he offers anything but a systematic or concerted study of Election, and he wanders far from the promise of his subtitle. Yet after these things are said, this remains a powerful work of the first importance.

God's First Love—the German edition was awarded a Martin Buber-Franz Rosenzweig Medal—is at once a record of personal anguish and an indictment of all Christendom, including much in the original Christian *kerygma*, for its centuries-old and continuing responsibility for anti-Semitism. "The Gospel of Jesus Christ, the 'Good News' of the Redeemer," Heer declares at the outset, "became for millions of Jews the messenger of death. Millions of Christians have based their hatred of the Jews on it, have taken it as a call to destroy or at least enslave the Jews, 'the people who killed Christ.'" Heer proceeds with the indictment: Christians increasingly identified the Jews as "a devilish, accursed race" whose destiny was either death or banishment or

A. ROY ECKARDT, *a new contributor, is professor of religion at Lehigh University. He and his wife Alice Eckardt have just published* Encounter with Israel: A Challenge to Conscience *(Association Press).*

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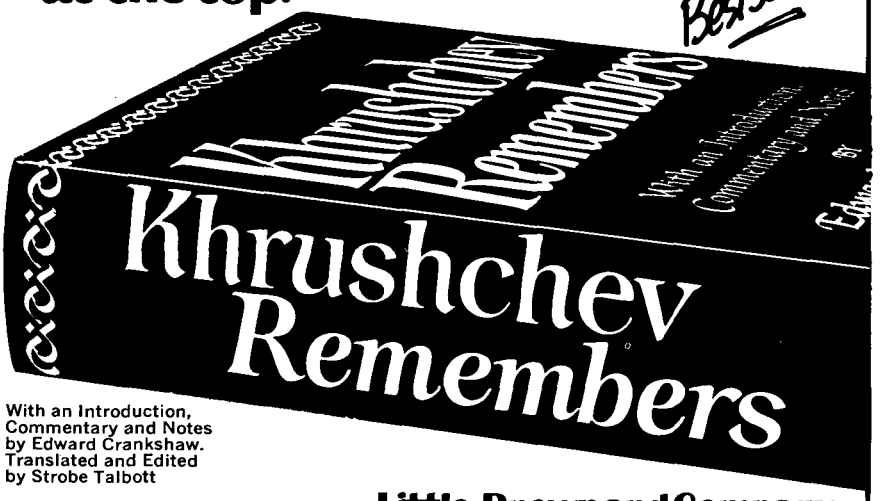

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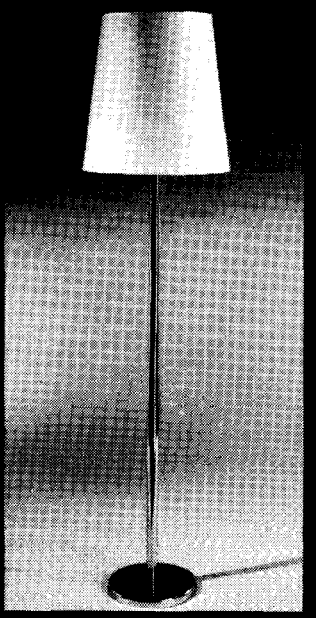
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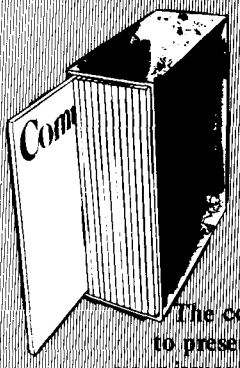

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compulsory baptism. The story reached one fateful climax in Martin Luther's portentous charge that the Jews had changed God into the devil. In the 1940's Rome was to prove incapable, intellectually and spiritually, of keeping even the Jews of Rome from the murderers' hands. Rolf Hochhuth's *The Deputy* accurately points to the churches' culpability "for everything which had happened between 1918 and 1945, in and around Germany, and in Europe as a whole." The Christian world's callous indifference and tacit approval enabled Hitler to turn Europe into a Jewish graveyard. Both actively and passively, Christendom helped to murder Jews. A number of attempts "have been made since 1945 to depict a resistance movement of the church against Hitler; in fact, the only resistance lay in the defense of the clergy's rights in their narrowest sense." Nor did the Holocaust do anything to end anti-Semitism. Since 1945, new acts against Jews have been perpetrated in many countries that were formed by Christian principles. It was "historically consistent that at the Second Vatican Council no fundamental declaration on the Jews was produced which might have led to real amends for Christian guilt towards that people." And, Heer concludes his grim catalogue, the world now looks on while another genocide of the Jews is planned in the Middle East.

While Heer's historical findings are hardly original, and some of his allegations are debatable, his work is notable, not only for its information, but for its prophetic strictures and passion. He is honest, loving, and, above all, angry. He joins a gathering international partnership of Christian thinkers possessed: men and women who simply will not tolerate Christian theology and behavior that mean harm to the Jewish people. Heer's standing ground is the truth that "the greatest temptation to which Christianity can succumb" is "to love God at the expense of human beings."

THE SALIENCE of Heer's contribution is his application of social-theological psychoanalysis to the history of anti-Semitism, and his search, within the same scientific domain, for ways of salvation from this dreadful malady.

What is the relation between the attack upon Man and Christendom's attack upon the Jew? The most momentous question provoked by Heer's work (though not by explicit design) is whether anti-Semitism is merely one more of the devil's unnumbered stratagems, just another species within the monster genus of prejudice-persecution-annihilation, or whether it is the devil himself, *the* moral cancer that suffuses the whole and destroys the entire human creation of God. The assertion is sometimes dared that the very imperium of the societal libido is, at least in the West, somehow relatable to anti-Semitism. For David Polish, for example, "the truth of every cause is validated or found fraudulent in the way in which it confronts the Jewish people."*

A "both-and" judgment upon this question is not impossible. However, by his inconclusiveness, Heer falls somewhat short of even this option. Often he construes anti-Semitic outbreaks as essentially dependent variables born of externally sovereign forces. Thus, "the collapse of the European 'balance of power' for which England had struggled for centuries . . . was basically responsible for the Jewish tragedy culminating in 1945. . . . The masses did not ask for anti-Semitism; they merely wanted to hate." On the other hand, Heer sometimes appears to opt for the all-decisive power and peculiarity of anti-Semitism. It has its own offspring: racialism, anti-Communism, clericalism, and anti-clericalism. The author also supports a finding in psychopathology that the anti-Semite is simply describing and living out his own disturbed condition. Essentially, according to this argument, anti-Semitism lives within the collective psyche of Jew-haters. The presence/absence and behavior/non-behavior of Jews are, in a large sense, irrelevant. The disease requires only imagined Jews, in con-

*"The Tasks of Israel and Galut," *Judaism*, Winter 1969.

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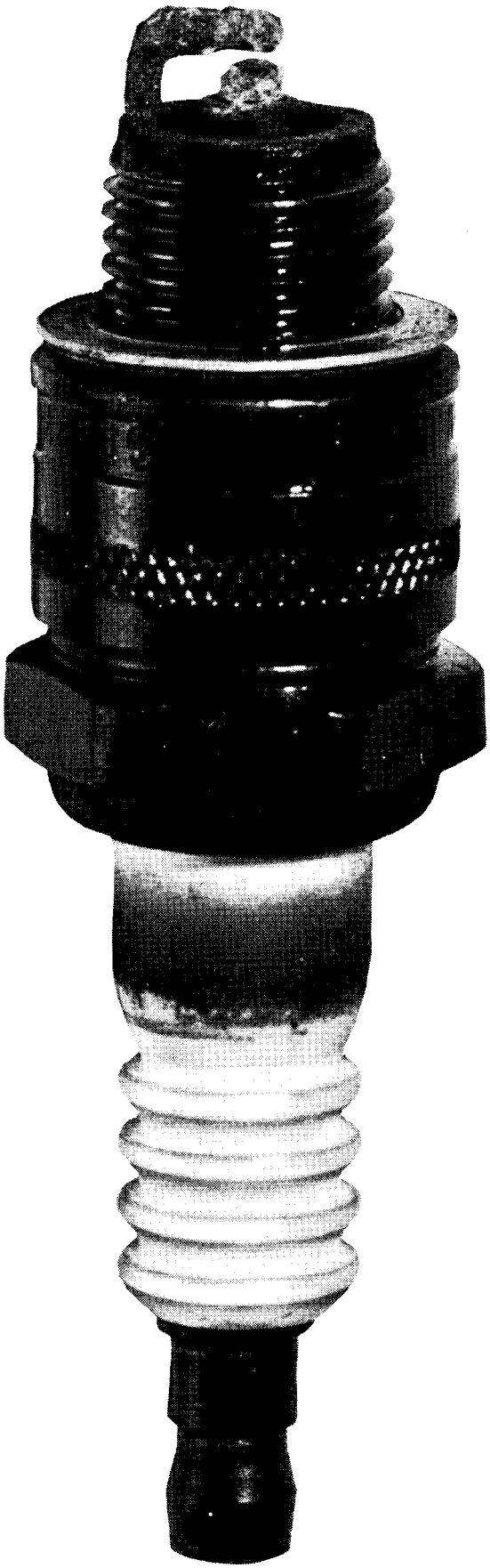

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trast to ordinary prejudice, for which real blacks, Slavs, *et al.* are needed. Adolf Hitler was entirely right: were there no Jews, we should have to invent them.

Although Heer fails to establish a final position on the question I raise, the data he amasses surely point to the *Einzigartigkeit* of anti-Semitism, whether we concentrate upon the anti-Semite as such or upon the Christian anti-Semite. The true anti-Semite does not comprehend Jewishness as a mere instance of human evil; he comprehends all human evil as the incarnation of Jewishness. As one Hungarian anti-Semite deduced, since the Jews refuse to face "the truth" about themselves revealed by the continuing persecutions of them, they are even the cause of anti-Semitism. There is nothing for which they are not to blame. They are, in a word, the devil.

ALL THE ABOVE has been made possible by historic Christianity, which does not teach that there are bad Jews along with bad Huns, Vandals, or Muslims, but teaches that the Jews killed God. To *be* a Jew is to deserve to die. It is an ineluctable truth that historic Christian thought has preponderantly agreed that the devil and the Jew are one. "The theologians had proved [Jewish guilt] a thousand times"; the Jew was no longer a human being. Adolf Hitler could quite correctly see himself as simply carrying out what the Church had for centuries preached and practiced against the Jews. And Hitler, as Heer reminds us, "was able right up to his death to enjoy the support of responsible leaders of both major Christian churches." He was never excommunicated and his writings were never placed on the Index.

These things, says Heer, are explicable, not by delineating purely historical pressures and counter-pressures, but rather by grasping the primordial conspiracy of Christendom with the demonic powers. The helpers and sympathizers of Hitler were everywhere, and especially in the churches. The roots of the Church's failure to oppose the Nazi policy of liquidation lay in its ambivalence toward Jews.

At this point, however, a difficulty presents itself. Whenever Heer appears to support a declaration that anti-Semitism is at once *sui generis* and the key to the decline and fall of Western man, he draws back. In the very moment that he numbers among the causes "of a specifically Christian sense of outrage" the Jew Jesus as a stumbling block in the presence of much older faiths, and the fifteen centuries in which "Christendom has shown itself to be the people guilty of God's murder," he retreats, curiously, into the indiscriminate truism that "every murder of a man is deicide"—"for 'Jewish' any other hate object can be substituted at will."

Again, Heer writes: "Christendom today stands close to the abyss of self-destruction through nuclear weapons. This suicide follows in historical terms logically from the practice, stretching over fifteen hundred years, of killing the blood relations of the Jew Jesus, the son of the Jewess Miriam, Mary. It is being prepared at deeply concealed levels of the subconscious. This subconscious is aware that Christendom has failed in its attempts to liquidate the Jews and to conquer the world." But once more Heer draws back. He goes on to intimate that anti-Semitism is simply a species of the wish to destroy and die. It is almost as though in the death camps we merely gave ourselves practice in the latest techniques of *self*-destruction. Here is a failure to point out that in the gas ovens and crematoria *we* disposed of *them*. Rather than reducing our destruction of Jews to an undertaking that provides inspirational help and incentive toward our future self-annihilation, Heer could have moved, on the basis of his own reasoning, to the conclusion that nuclear suicide will comprise Christendom's specific revenge upon itself, as upon a bungling world, for the one unforgivable sin against the Holy Ghost: the failure to kill every last Jew.

A most severe lapse is the categorical attestation that "the disregard of the fate of the Jews between 1918 and 1945 can only be understood as part of a general disregard for Man and the world." Heer's own chronicle of the unending, universal horror of Christian anti-Semitism ought to have produced the very opposite judgment: that the disregard of the fate of Man between 1918 and 1945 (as in other periods) can only be understood by means of the disregard of Jews. "The Jew Jesus was to blame. The Jew Jesus has to be repressed." The blame and the repression were visited upon the Jews, and then only derivatively upon other men. Self-destructiveness is not what accounts for anti-Semitism; anti-Semitism accounts for our self-destructiveness. Anti-Semitism is the special way we murder God; thus, in a sense, we have already destroyed the world.

Finally, Heer ignores the obvious. Men unanimously deplore nuclear destruction; this was anything but the case with the destruction of the six million Jews. The Nazis were, in fact, surprised by the world's silent admiration of them, as they were by the absence of any serious resistance to the "Final Solution." But the author's own obsessive fear of the coming nuclear end of mankind acts to obfuscate the truth that in Christian anti-Semitism the works of the devil very "carefully" and "responsibly" usurp the works of God. Because of this, a universal nuclear death is, morally speaking, a comparative triviality which may, in fact, be stumbled into rather than—as was the case with the destruction of European Jewry—reasoned out as the "will" of God executed by avengers for Jesus Christ. Only the devil can manufacture and deliver devilish accusations. Psychologically and morally construed, the charge of Jewish devilishness demonstrates the satanic conquest of the Christian soul. The Christian is the "Jew" he despises. I would even go so far as to say that the Jew is in fact the "Christian": Jewish ideals and behavior are the polar opposite of the Church's accusations. The Jewish world-conspiracy is the invention of demon-ridden Christian conspirators.

THE WAY we construe the nature of anti-Semitism will not only influence our reading of the centuries-old record; it will also determine, fatefully, our choice of

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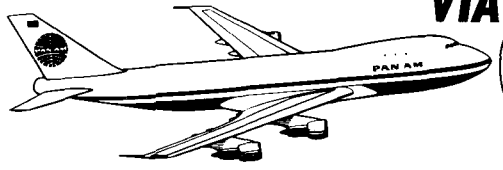

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weapons in waging the warfare to which Friedrich Heer calls us. If anti-Semitism is an incomparable wrong possessed of incomparably demonic power, our strategies against it must be markedly different from those we should use were we to consider anti-Semitism merely one more wrong among many.

Heer believes, or at least he hopes, that Christianity can yet redeem itself. His study culminates in one of the first applications of a "theology of hope" to relations of Christians with Jews. Even if Christianity is the *fons et origo* of Christian anti-Semitism, Heer maintains doggedly that in Christian faith itself, *once its Jewish foundation is restored,* lies the only real deliverance from anti-Semitism. The secular basis and counterpart of his reasoning is the social-Freudian claim that the one way to the future is through a "positive dissolution" and rehabilitation of the past. Through a great act of self-analysis Christendom may yet purge itself of its sins.

According to Heer, everything depends upon whether Christendom will surmount its Augustinian (and Pauline) contempt for the world, entailing as this does an exclusivist negation of true messianic hope. We must "return to the Old Testament roots of Christ's own piety and to even older roots —to the original faith in which man felt himself to be both God's creature and his responsible partner." Were Christianity to recognize and condemn its own repetition of the murder of its Christ through the murders of his brothers and sisters, it would be, in that very moment, set free to return to where it belongs: to the Jew Jesus. "By rooting itself in its true soil, Christianity would achieve the great acceptance of the world—the acceptance of 'earthly' love. Only Eros can dissolve the neuroses and pathological self-isolation of Christianity in relation to the Jew Jesus, to Man's history and to itself. . . . A Christendom enriched by Israel and Jewish piety would recognize that the so-called eternal values are only true and genuine when they are made incarnate, when they become flesh in history and when they are realized in the society of Man."

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To some extent, Heer's demand upon the Church is being taken seriously. Within Christian biblical scholarship and theology there is increasing affirmation of the Jewishness of Jesus and of the Jewish dimensions of Christian faith. Again, the struggle against asceticism that is now sweeping the Christian world must be noted on Heer's side. For one way to comprehend anti-Semitism is to see in it an inevitable product of celibate, ascetic monks and priests with their natural (or unnatural) fantasies of Jewish "carnality" and "materialism." This would seem to suggest that, other things being equal—they never are—the abolishment of a celibate clergy would be, ideally, a greater blow against anti-Semitism than a thousand educational programs. However, Heer does not really dispose of the obvious rejoinder that Protestantism, in more than one respect the antithesis of Catholic Augustinianism, is no less blameworthy than Catholicism respecting anti-Semitism, and in some instances has a worse record. On the other hand, Heer does attest that the preservation within Calvinism of Christianity's Jewish roots has kept Calvinist countries from bloody persecutions of Jews.

I believe that the very psychological considerations to which Heer rightly draws our attention compound the problem more than they help to resolve it. The identification of anti-Semitism with the devil does nothing to make the devil go away. He may simply thrive on the publicity.

The denial of Christian Jewishness has all too obviously opened the way to anti-Semitic diabolism. Yet it is most doubtful whether we can any longer expect the contrary result by virtue of the affirmation of Christian Jewishness. Is the Christian acceptance of Jesus (other than by individuals) any longer possible? Has not the entrenched union of Christian sin with the *faits accomplis* of history cut off any real possibility of this form of social regeneration? Is it not now much more probable that any self-identified Jewishness on the part of the Church will intensify its adherents' hatred of Jews and, therefore, of Jesus?

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There is the agonizing question of whether a full disclosure of historic Christian sins against Jews will have good consequences or bad ones. After all, the truth that the Nazis only brought to fulfillment historic Christian teaching can be readily utilized by enemies of Jews. The very insinuation to Christians that they and their religion have been invaded by demonic forces may—no matter how diplomatically or psychotherapeutically the judgment is tendered—build greater obstacles to redemption. To reidentify Judaism as the religion of the father, with Christianity as the religion of the son, or even to offer the symbology of elder and younger brothers, as I myself have done,* may be to call up angry and destructive impulses. The most horrifying eventuality of all is that the new Christian testimony that the Jewish people are not cast away by God but remain the people of His covenant will only drive us deeper into the hell of anti-Semitism, by arousing as yet unconquered enmities within the Christian soul. Friedrich Heer's testimony that in the Jews there lurks "the hidden God, who unmasks the living lie in every human being" grasps us with its truthfulness. Yet it must also make us fearful of the sufferings it promises. Heer himself wonders whether Christendom, which has for ages considered itself mortally wronged, can now bear the insult of being exposed as the real criminal. If Christianity is in fact hell, who has ever found a human path up from hell? It is hard for me to believe that the way out is through some kind of social-psychological, theological, or even moral reform.

THAT Vienna should be the place from which Professor Heer writes symbolizes at one and the same time much of the appeal and much of the irony of his work. Great societal-religious entities simply do not respond along the personal-redemptive lines he proposes. The presumption that social-psychoanalytic therapy can somehow salvage a centuries-old institutional structure is infinitely more tenuous than the psychoanalytic claim for the salvation of the individual, which itself remains highly controversial; lamentably, compelling diagnosis is not in itself a cure.

But in this connection Professor Heer is honest and perceptive enough to sense a pursuit by failure. The word "only," which he so repeatedly uses, signifies not alone a uniquely qualified remedy but also, I submit, the probable impossibility of realizing so high an ideal as his: *Only* the remorseless self-analysis that wholly uncovers our past, that "takes us into and through the hell of Christian hatred of the Jew," can make a neurotic Christianity whole again; yet any such process remains "as perilous as the psychoanalysis of a single person." *Only* a few have thus far attained the requisite mental and spiritual maturity. "Within the deeply sick community of Man dwell deeply sick churches, and they form the centers of pathological processes constantly leading to new explosions." Revealingly, Heer questions whether it "would be possible to find within a Christianity very largely composed of wounded, outraged, and sick souls and minds, personalities strong enough to take on" the arduous journey through hell which is self-analysis. Heer is himself forced to retreat from the macrocosm of social redemption to the microcosm of a small elite. And, pitiably, for the entire Holocaust period he can find only three theologians prepared for the journey. Even more pitiably, one of these is Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who (although the author fails to point it out) held a position vis-à-vis the Jewish people that is hardly to be emulated. Heer calls out for heroes but he must also concede that most of us barbarians are neither ready nor willing nor able to serve.

TO ADJUDGE THAT the author's "only" solution is sadly utopian need not in itself rule out hope, though it does demand the total transformation of our thinking for the sake of an alternative "only": the death of Christianity itself. Death, after all, overcomes the past at least as tellingly and valuably as psychoanalysis.

Friedrich Heer implies the following conclusion, though he does not ever express it (perhaps he cannot stand the terrifying outcome of so many of his own words): Because we took the wonderful goodness of Christianity and changed it into God's misdeed, because we have transubstantiated that faith into a cancer for humanity, we can now only commit ourselves to the demise of whatever remains of Christianity—lest worse crimes be committed. We can now only deny God for His sake, that is, for the sake of other human beings. Perhaps the only chance left is for God to die in this way. Perhaps then He may live once more, not because of us, but because He is "the coming God: a God of the present and of the future, in which He will submerge the brutal past."

The Party's Over . . .

RADICAL CHIC AND MAU-MAUING THE FLAK CATCHERS. By TOM WOLFE. *Farrar, Straus & Giroux. 153 pp. $5.95.*

Reviewed by JOSEPH EPSTEIN

THE LEONARD BERNSTEINS' evening with the Black Panthers was not an event parallel to the draining away of moral authority in the French monarchy under Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette during the last days of the *ancien régime*. Nor was it in any way comparable to the incursions of the Visigoths during the twilight of the Roman Empire. Although it may have called such episodes to mind for people with a heightened sense of history and a taste for the dissolution of civilizations, it of course represented nothing so grand. For the Bernsteins and their friends, if not exactly for the Panthers, it appeared to be just another night out, which, as would later become evident, was to prove part of the problem. If the evening's historical significance was slight, culturally it provided an exquisite moment of lunacy: a crazy scramble of values

*Elder and Younger Brothers (Scribner).

JOSEPH EPSTEIN, *a frequent contributor, reviewed* You Might As Well Live: The Life and Times of Dorothy Parker *by John Keats in our January issue.*

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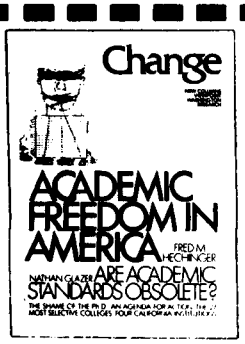

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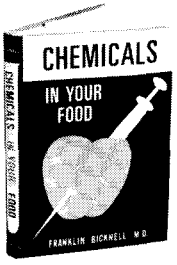

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that had Jews inviting acknowledged anti-Semites into their home, the flower of bourgeois society tippling with lumpen-revolutionaries, and a crowd of first-nighters gathered together for a glimpse of the Third World.

If Felicia Bernstein had only let them eat cake! But, a delicate and elegant hostess to the end, she chose instead hors d'oeuvres of Roquefort cheese rolled in crushed nuts, asparagus tips in mayonnaise dabs, and meatballs *petites au Coq Hardi*. If these had been set on plain trays on a sideboard, or on coffee tables, or even atop her husband's two grand pianos, it might have helped; but, no, the hors d'oeuvres were served, as on any other social evening at the Bernsteins', on silver trays carried by uniformed South American maids followed by a butler toting drinks. If she had simply telephoned a handful of friends to come round to her apartment to hear about, and possibly contribute to, a cause, this might have made the evening, in retrospect, look a bit less ridiculous; but instead, not one to condescend, she arranged for her stationer to send out engraved invitations. There were scores of other little touches, details seen after, and doubtless customary extravagances allowed to go uncurtailed, all of which would later conduce to make Mrs. Bernstein, her husband, and their friends seem so quintessentially those stock figures of democratic humor—the idiot rich.

The major detail the Bernsteins overlooked that evening, as everyone now knows, was keeping the journalist Tom Wolfe the hell out of their Park Avenue duplex. But by the next day, even without Wolfe, the Bernsteins must have known they had a disaster on their hands when an account of their evening with the Black Panthers, which they had deemed a serious political occasion, appeared on the society page of the New York *Times*. Things worsened the following day when the *Times* came thumping down on the Bernsteins in typically heavy-handed fashion with an editorial accusing them and all who had been at their home of "elegant slumming." Still, the whole affair might well have been forgotten if not for Mr. Wolfe, who made of it, in "Radical Chic," the center of a minor comic masterpiece.

THE BERNSTEINS' evening with the Black Panthers is a subject Tom Wolfe might almost be said to have been born to write about. Wolfe has long been interested in the cultural fringes of American life, and he has always been marvelously attuned to all the nuttiness of the small gradations of status that play so large a role on these fringes. He also has an extraordinary ability to enter into the spirit of an event or occasion. Whether his subject be men's tailoring, stock-car racing, or disc-jockeying, he is invariably able to convey a vivid sense of what it is about these things that exhilarate those who go in for them—what it is, in short, that turns people on. Sometimes one can be put off by the fireworks of his prose style; one can be uninterested in the particular cultural fringe that is absorbing his interest at the moment; or one can dislike the need his kind of writing often has to be superior to its subject. But in "Radical Chic" the fireworks of Wolfe's prose are in fact held to a minimum; the cultural fringe he is describing really is important (whatever one may think of the people gathered at the Bernsteins' apartment, they do, in their respective fields, constitute something of an elite); and Wolfe has no need to display any superiority to his subject, for, so inherently ludicrous was the event he set out to describe, that a properly cold-eyed description suffices to do the job.

Yet, ostensibly, there is nothing funny about the subject. Certainly there is nothing funny about the Black Panthers. As Wolfe characterizes the Panthers in the other of the two essays in this book, "Mau-Mauing the Flak Catchers," which is about the attempts of various "Third World" ethnic groups to get a piece of the anti-poverty-program action in San Francisco, they are not comical in the least:

> Everybody has his own angle and his own way of looking at black

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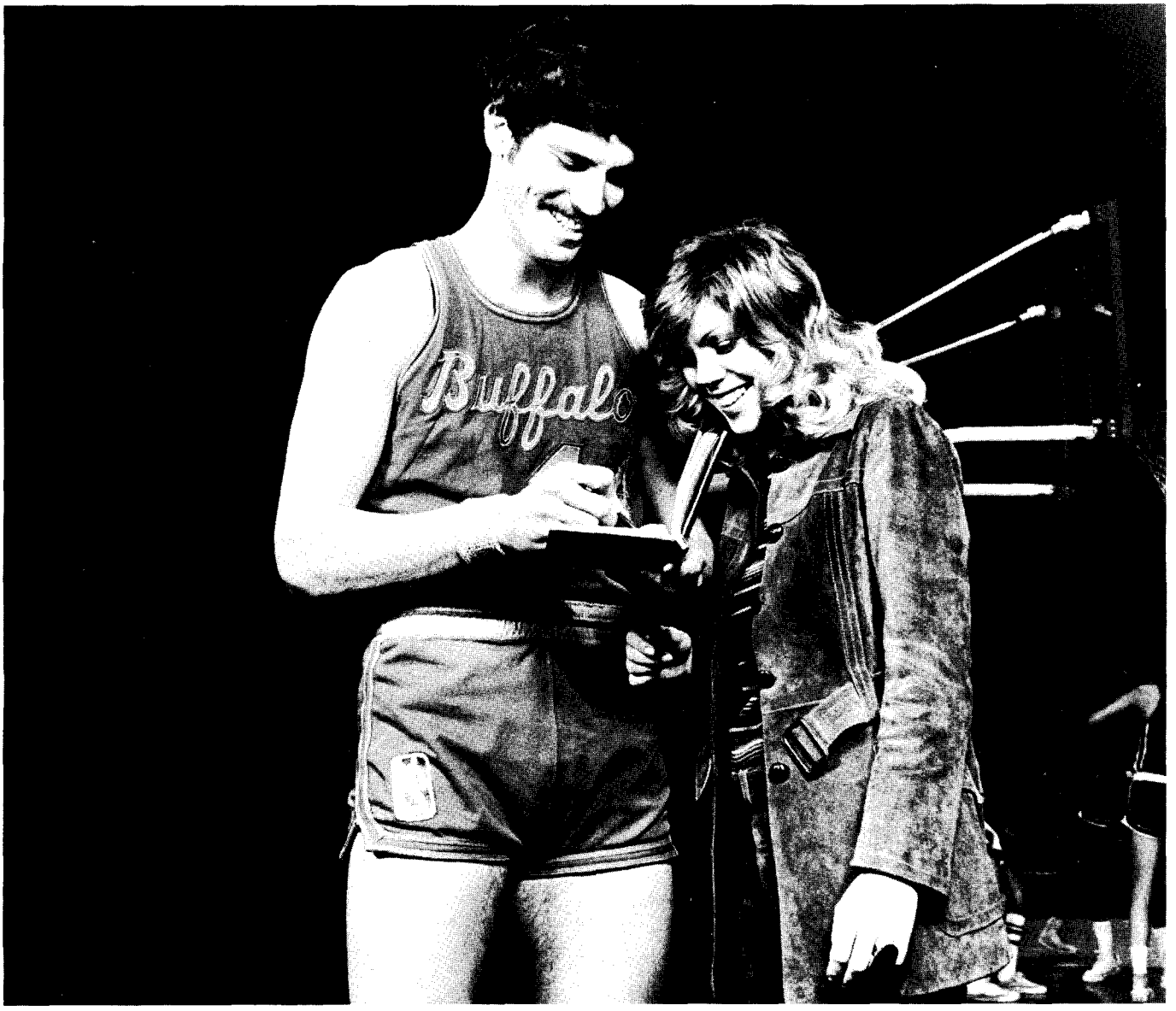

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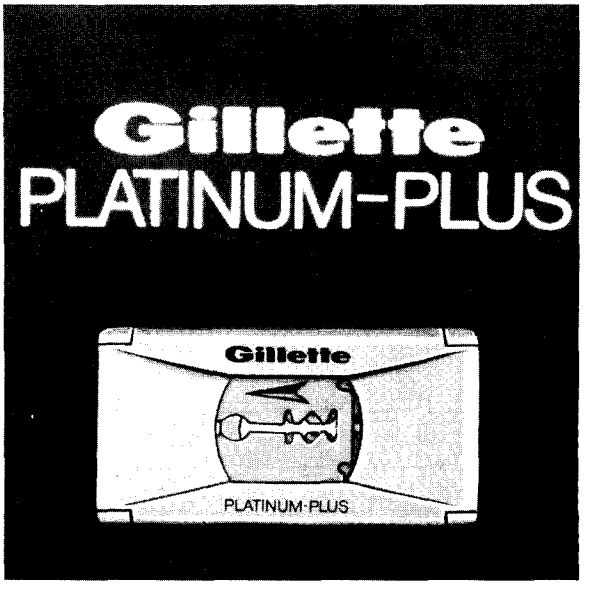

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power. The Panthers were on a very special trip. The Panthers were fighting the Pig. And the Pig was fighting the Panthers. If you joined the Panthers, you had to be ready to fight the police, because that was the trip you'd be on. One of the main things you stood to get out of it was a club up side your head, or a bullet. If you were a man who had really been worked over by the police, then you could relate to that and you were ready for that fight. . . . But as bad as things were in the ghettos, there weren't but so many aces who were ready to play it all-or-nothing that way.

Nor was the ostensible reason that Felicia Bernstein decided to have her evening for the Panthers funny either. It was to help raise bail money and legal expenses for fourteen of the twenty-one Panthers indicted and then jailed for allegedly having plotted a series of terrorist bombings in New York City in the spring of 1969. What the Bernsteins were supposedly trying to accomplish was not merely to raise money for the Panther legal defense but also to publicize, and thereby make visible, what they considered an injustice done against the Panthers. None of this is funny.

WHAT made for comedy, however, was the fact that, despite their tremendous dissimilarities in almost every other regard, both groups, the Panthers and their wives and the Bernsteins and their friends, were equally locked in their equally rigid styles. The Bernsteins could no more contemplate an evening without servants than the Panthers could disavow violence or let up on their dreary rhetoric. Beyond this common rigidity, the only other point of commonality one can make out between the two groups were the black turtlenecks worn both by the Panthers and Mr. Bernstein.

Wolfe pretty much lays off the Panthers, restricting himself to describing their dress and reporting their occasional comments and the speech of Don Cox, the Panther field marshal who was the evening's main attraction. He never attempts to tell us, as he does for the whites in the room, what the Panthers must have been thinking of this extraordinary night—and God alone knows what precise combination of awe, contempt, and a hundred other emotions they felt at finding themselves in such surroundings and under such circumstances. Yet however sad, misguided, or even frightening one might think the Panthers generally, on this particular evening at least their motive was clear: they were on Park Avenue to get money.

The motives of the Bernsteins and their friends had to be much more mixed. They were there, it is true, to aid the Panthers' legal-defense fund. But they were also there to view the Panthers up close, caged as it were in the newest kind of political minstrel show: "I've never met a Panther—this is a first for me!" said Cheray Duchin, the wife of the society piano player. They were there for personal therapy: "God," Mr. Bernstein remarked at one point in the evening, "most of the people in this room have had a problem being wanted." And they were there, finally, because it was fashionable to be there. Their sin, and sin in this instance it most assuredly was, was the sin of unseriousness.

WOLFE HAS his own theory about the evening. He sees it as a classic instance of *nostalgie de la boue*, the 19th-century European upper-class phenomenon of imitating, whoring after, and generally romanticizing the primitive lower classes. There is something to this, though one suspects that the correspondences between the Bernsteins' set and 19th-century aristocratic circles probably ought best not be pressed too firmly. In any case, more precise historical analogies are nearer at hand, for alliances between the elite and the mob are not unknown to our own century. As with the Bernsteins' set and the Panthers, brought together by a common hatred of ordinary middle-class life, such alliances rested, in Hannah Arendt's words, "largely on [the] genuine delight with which the former watched the latter destroy respectability."

Yet, as Wolfe also makes clear, Radical Chic is really very much a double-track affair; while the Black Panthers, as the funkiest and most far-out of black militants, provided a special *frisson*, on the other hand neither were the people gathered at the Bernsteins' wholly insensitive to what they deemed the Panthers' desperate situation. Here too there are historical precedents. Tocqueville remarks that in the decade preceding 1789 in France there was, among the upper classes, "much compassion . . . shown for the poor, there was constant talk about their wrongs, and frequent attempts were made to find remedies for them. . . . And as a rule the terms in which these new, charitable sentiments were expressed were as ill-advised as the callousness displayed in former years."

However comfortable they might otherwise feel in the world, in the matter of social justice the Bernsteins and their friends proved perfect parvenus. All they had to go on, apart from their need to differentiate themselves from the ordinary middle class, was their sense of style, and the inappropriateness of their particular style to the matter at hand supplies Wolfe with some of his most telling comic effects. His continual references to such items as Dior Boutique Pyjamas, Pucci clings, Gucci shoes, Capucci scarves, Billy Baldwin sofas, and so on, far from being—as some of his critics have charged—beside the point, are right on target. For the essence of Radical Chic is precisely that it is devoid of content. At the moment in America it runs much lower down the social scale than the Leonard Bernsteins of Park Avenue. At least in part, it is behind such phenomena as the radical professors (those guerrillas with tenure, in Irving Howe's phrase), closet revolutionists working at high salaries for large corporations, and upper-middle-class students in search of a political high. What the Bernsteins' evening accomplished, with the indispensable aid of Tom Wolfe, was, by exaggerating an already bizarre phenomenon, to show it up for the foolish, misguided, and ultimately self-destructive tendency it really is.

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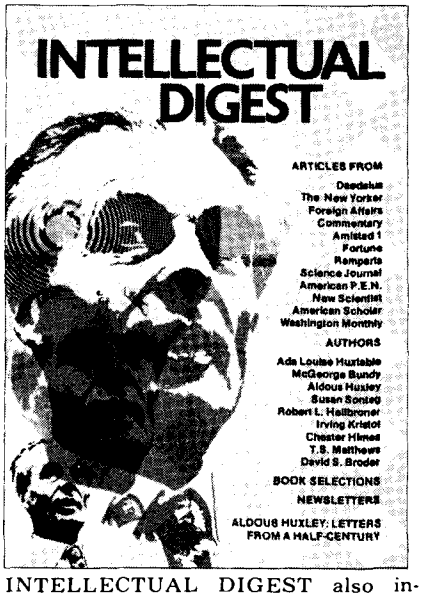

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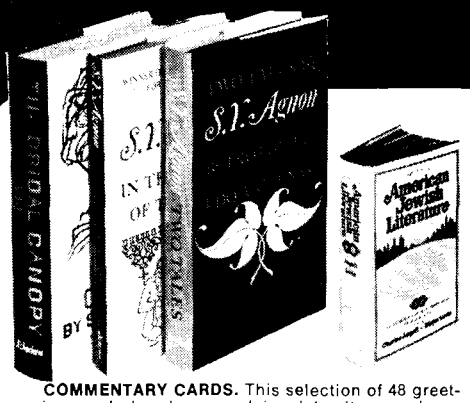

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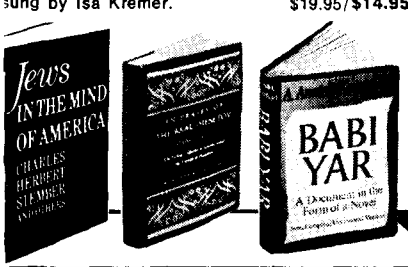

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